

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Mahabharata War Chronology Issue.

Born in 1912, Professor G. W. Kaveeshwar had a brilliant academic career at the Holkar College and the Christian College at Indore (M.P.). Obtaining the Master's degree in Philosophy in 1932, he also later passed the Law examination standing first in the (Agra) University. But for a few intervening years as Judicial Officer, he has devoted his lifetime to studying, teaching, lecturing and writing on Philosophy. In addition he has also been College Principal and has guided and examined research work in different Indian universities.

Back in 1933, Professor Kaveeshwar's book *The Metaphysics of Berkeley* was published; which, said the *London Times*, is "in many ways an achievement of unusual merit. He has a sound faculty of philosophical discrimination...his nicely-balanced criticism and appreciation of Berkeley...outstanding philosophical merits of Mr. Kaveeshwar's work..." The reviewer in the famous *Philosophy* of England also expressed, "I respect the achievement". Eminent persons appreciating it included the British philosopher C. E. M. Joad and Dr. G. A. Johnston. Two years later came out his work in Marathi on Art and Morality, hailed as the best Marathi essay of the year; and prescribed for higher studies by the universities of Bombay, Poona, Nagpur, Indore, Karnataka, Baroda, etc. Two scholars have written a book discussing Professor Kaveeshwar's views on this subject. Not to mention his other works, in 1951 appeared the voluminous Marathi *Gita-tattva-darshana*, containing an exhaustive, comparative and original study of the famous Gita discourse; followed recently by its English edition *The Ethics of the Gita*, with a foreword by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, and recognised as Learned Research Work by the University Grants Commission of India. In the meanwhile he edited (and contributed to) *The Problems of Child Education in India*. In 1963 he was elected President of the first Marathi Literary Conference of M. P.

And now he presents the chronological Secrets of the great Mahabharata.

Chronological Secrets of the Mahabharata War

"And then the great sage Vyas started creating subtle riddles in the epic; throwing in respect of them the following challenge: (I have introduced in the Mahabharata) eight thousand eight hundred (enigmatic) verses, (the true meanings of) which are known (only) to me, to (my son) Shuka, and but to some extent to (my pupil) Sanjaya'. Those riddle-verses (of Vyas) have remained till now a mysterious puzzle due to their hidden subtle import."

MAHABHARATA, ADI PARVA,
1/80,81,82

DR SHIVMANGAL SINGH
'SUMAN', D. Litt, Vice-
chancellor, Vikram University,
Ujjain:

"By his unravelling of the mystery of the Mahabharata war chronology, professor Kaveeshwar has resolved a very major and knotty problem of ancient history. It is indeed the apt reward for his lifelong study and ceaseless pursuit in the path of knowledge. This systematic exposition of the Mahabharata chronology may very well be regarded as a significant contribution to world culture."

(For views by the great Scholar-statesman Dr. Sampurnanand former chief minister U. P., the eminent Indologist Dr. Mirashi D. Litt., and others, please see inside).

G. W. KAVEESHWAR

CHRONOLOGICAL SECRETS
OF
THE MAHABHARATA WAR

(The true Date of Gita - discourse)

By

G. W. KAVEESHWAR

Professor of Philosophy

1972

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PREFACE

When I declared about five years back publicly and privately that the ancient time-riddles of the great epic of Mahabharata, which were defying solution for centuries, have at long last been consistently resolved, and the dates of the epic's principal events precisely settled, hardly a few believed me; — which was quite natural. One of the first to take me seriously, however, was the late Dr. Sampurnanand, a profound scholar of modern India, former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and Governor of Rajasthan, whose most encouraging words are quoted elsewhere. Next was the erudite Mr. L. O. Joshi, I. A. S., then Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Government of India; who inaugurated (and attended) my first lecture series on this research at the Lalbahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Delhi. That was followed by similar lecture series at several other prominent places like Bombay, Nagpur, Poona, Indore, Goa, etc. At Nagpur the veteran Indologist Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. V. V. Mirashi, D. Litt., renowned scholar of Sanskrit and History, after a close observation of the thesis announced that the numerous apparently inconsistent chronological references in the vast Mahabharata have now for the first time been all satisfactorily explained and reconciled.

I am also deeply grateful to Dr. Shivamangal Singh 'Suman', D. Litt., Vice-Chancellor of the Vikram University, Ujjain. While literally very busy, due not only to the affairs of the University but also the diverse activities in the wider all-India field of education and literature which call for his guidance, Dr. Suman spared some time to preside over my lectures under the auspices of the University; and further also kindly brought out a special issue of its research journal, devoting it exclusively to my main conclusions regarding the Mahabharata War Chronology, both in English and Hindi. The present book embodies its English portion.

In the meanwhile the complete research with all details is also ready in manuscript form, at present in Hindi, and awaits publication. Its first portion deals with the pre-war period (covering mainly the thirteen years of exile); and the second with the war itself, of which the present essay is a resume.

I also thank the editors of the numerous newspapers and periodicals, in diverse languages, that published from time to time reports, articles and editorials regarding this research.

34, Janaki Nagar,
INDORE, (M. P.) }

G. W. KAVEESHWAR

5-12-72

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CORRIGENDUM

Page	Line	For	Read
1	17	knows	know
45	21	that night	that time
53	13	banks of the Himalayan (or, slightly reddish) river Saraswati,	confluence of the Aruna and Saraswati rivers,
55	4	in his own camp!	
			while on the field of Kuru- kshetra, in his portion, along with his army.
55	24	(please drop the word 'camps').	

CHRONOLOGICAL SECRETS OF THE MAHABHARATA WAR

It is well known that Mahabharata, the ancient epic of India, is one of the masterpieces of world literature. There is an interesting legend regarding its composition. Its author, traditionally believed to be the poet Vyasa, desired to dictate it first to Ganesha, the God of Learning. The latter however agreed to be the scribe on condition that his pen should go on without stop. The poet put a counter-condition of his own that the writer should take down the verses only after grasping their true import. In this background the poet went on inserting in between the text such intriguing verses containing subtle riddles, that even the God of Learning required some time to grasp their true meaning. During those moments the poet composed further verses, thus keeping up the continuous flow of dictation on his part!

Whatever the legend, the fact remains that the great author of the epic has deliberately introduced therein several riddles, to unravel which scholars have been trying hard since centuries. The Adi Parva (1/80, 81, 82)¹ counts these riddle-verses as 8800, with a challenging assertion that only the poet himself and his son Shuka knows them all in their true import; while Sanjaya, a disciple of his, knows only a part of them.

*aṣṭau ślokaśaṣṭāṇi
aṣṭau ślokaśatāni ca
ahaṁ vedmi śuko vetti
saṅjāyo vetti vā na vā.*

— Adi Parva, 1/81

These riddles are of various sorts. Some are philosophical in nature; and are mostly found in the famous Gītā dialogue. Some riddles are

1. The Mahabharata verses quoted and referred to by me are taken from the edition published by the Gita Press, Gorakhpur. But I have also compared them with the edition published by the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute of Poona, which gives numerous alternative readings besides the one it prefers as authoritative. Apart of course from the difference in the serial numbers of the chapters and verses, I have found that the slight verbal variations in the body of the verses hardly affect the main argument in this thesis. Where at one or two places the difference is of serious consequence, I have pointed it out specifically, showing how the reading followed by me is definitely more reliable. However the translation (in Hindi) given by the Gita Press follows at several crucial places the traditional misconceptions, the untenability of which has been explained here in details.

inserted in the description of events. Thus, for example, the poet's account of one most dramatic incident in the war culminating in the killing of Jayadratha by Arjuna before sunset contains a first class riddle. Some riddles deal with the location of places; they are found in some parts of the Vana Parva. Lastly, there are the famous time-riddles concerned with the chronology and precise dates of important events.

It is these riddles that have created apparently irreconcilable inconsistencies at so many places in the text of the Mahabharata; which has led several scholars even to advance the theory that the epic has been composed not by one but many authors living in different times. I am however now happy to say with all humility that most of the time-riddles (not to deal with the other riddles here) have been now resolved, yielding one vast intricate but quite consistent theme of the great epic. During the last three years I have delivered lectures on this subject at the Shastri Sanskrit Rashtriya Vidyapeeth (Delhi), The Indore University, Vikram University (Ujjain), Vidarbha Research Institute (Nagpur), as also at Bombay, Goa, Poona, Amaraoti etc; besides radio talks in English, Hindi and Marathi. The entire research with all proofs and arguments awaits publication. In the meanwhile it is proposed to state in this essay the main conclusions arrived at concerning the chronology of the great Mahabharata war; keeping aside for the present the important pre-war dates. In this context let me first place before the reader the main war-time riddles, which had been the despair of scholars for centuries, but solutions to which now clearly appear in sight.

General Background

To start with, here is in brief the broad background of the great war. The blind king Dhritarashtra of Hastinapur had hundred sons known as Kauravas. He had a younger brother Pandu whose five sons were known as Pandavas. The latter lost their father Pandu in their childhood; and so their widowed mother Kunti came with the five children to Hastinapur to stay with Dhritarashtra. All the one hundred and five cousins were therefore brought up and educated together. Drona was their common preceptor; while Bhishma, the common grandfather, looked after them as Dhritarashtra himself was blind.

The Pandavas were comparatively far more virtuous and valorous, and so more respected and loved by the public in general than their Kaurava cousins. From the childhood, therefore, the Kaurava brothers led by Duryodhana, the eldest of them, began to feel intense jealousy for the Pandavas; and in fact even made several attempts to physically harm them, from which however the Pandavas escaped safely every time through good luck. After attaining adolescence the Pandavas established

their separate kingdom at Indraprastha, while Duryodhana ruled at Hastinapur.

By their matchless bravery coupled with virtuous generosity the Pandavas soon extended their sway over a large part of India, accumulating vast riches and wealth. This excited all the more the jealousy of Duryodhana. However, unable to compete with or conquer the Pandavas in open fight, Duryodhana invited them to Hastinapur for a game of dice. In the game the Kauravas, presumably due to artificially loaded dice, won each throw; and the Pandavas lost everything that was staked by them, their vast wealth, kingdom, their own freedom and finally even Draupadi, the dearest wife and crowned empress. The weeping Draupadi was dragged to the open assembly as a slave of the Kauravas and sought to be shamelessly dishonoured. There was a great hue and cry from all quarters, and ultimately the blind Dhritarashtra intervened to grant back their freedom as also kingdom to the Pandavas who immediately left for Indraprastha.

Within minutes, however, Duryodhana, with his blind father's permission, recalled the Pandavas for a second game of dice. The condition this time was that the losing party would go into exile for thirteen long years, of which the last one year was to be spent in hiding. If any one of the exiled party was discovered during the thirteenth year, the party was to return once more to similar exile. On the contrary, if the last year of hiding was successfully over, their kingdom would be restored to them.

The Pandavas again lost in the second game of dice and so immediately left on the same day for the exile. To cut the long story short, they completed the exile period and then went into hiding for the thirteenth year. Duryodhana did his best to search them but failed. Finally the Pandavas themselves emerged out of the hiding on the date on which according to them the thirteenth year had exactly ended. However Duryodhana insisted that the year had not ended by then, and so refused to restore the kingdom. Hence the war.

This now brings us to the subtle chronological riddles introduced in the Mahabharata by its great author. After all, who was correct in counting the period of the thirteenth year—the Pandavas or the Kauravas? Obviously the entire moral stand of the Pandavas, and their divine friend, philosopher and guide Lord Krishna, indeed of the entire epic of the Mahabharata including the worldfamous Gita discourse, would fall to the ground, if the Pandavas had not in fact completed the stipulated period of thirteen years. Scholars have therefore been debating this point for centuries.

It is clear that the correct answer to this vital problem would first need the exact ascertainment of the date on which the exile started, and on which the Pandavas emerged from their hiding. It is only then that one can decide whether the thirteenth year was in fact completed by the Pandavas. But the master poet has very skilfully kept secret the starting date of the exile. While as for the closing date, all that is said in the Mahabharata is that it was the dark eighth of the hot (Grishma) season, without specifying the exact month. Of course its author has at the same time kept in it subtle clues indicating those dates.

It is these two most important dates that have now been exactly calculated and ascertained. Besides, the poet only says that Duryodhana maintained that the 13th year was not completed when the Pandavas emerged; but does not clarify when precisely it should have ended according to Duryodhana himself. That date in the mind of Duryodhana has also now been ascertained. And with that, the most interesting and curious fact has come to light that the thirteenth year should have ended according to the calculations of Duryodhana exactly eighteen days after the date on which the Pandavas emerged. The secret is thus now clear that just due to this difference of eighteen days, the master poet has described the actual fighting period in the terrible war as eighteen days! The war was actually fought for eighteen days; that is, for the duration of eighteen days, and at the same time on account of the eighteen days which according to Duryodhana the Pandavas should have spent more in hiding! All these chronological calculations, now finalised, throw a flood of light on the system of the calendars prevalent at the time of the composition of the Mahabharata. They further show that the Pandavas had duly and meticulously completed the stipulated period of thirteen years; but, what is more curious, that Duryodhana also had a plausible (though ultimately untenable) case in his support, due to which he too could collect for the war a vast army loyal to him. That is again one of the great chronological riddles of the master poet. However, as I have said above, all this forms the earlier part of this research, and though equally interesting, is not for the present being expounded in this essay which is mainly confined to the subtle dates of the war period.

To proceed further, when Duryodhana refused to restore their kingdom to the Pandavas, both sides started serious preparations for the impending war. Vast armies were collected on either side. In the meanwhile attempts were also being made for an amicable settlement, but they proved of no avail. Finally when both the armies stood fully equipped and ready for fighting, Lord Krishna himself agreed to go to the Kauravas in a final bid for peaceful compromise of the dispute between two sections of the same family. Scholars of Mahabharata are generally agreed that the date on which Lord Krishna started from the

town of Upaplavya (where the Pandavas were then temporarily staying) for Hastinapur for the talks, was two or three days prior to the *pūrṇimā* (full moon day) of the month of Kartika, with the moon in Rewati constellation. There is a minor chronological riddle regarding the actual time taken by Krishna for this journey. The dates fixed in this essay begin from the date on which these peace talks were held at Hastinapur. The talks failed in a single sitting due to the utter obstinacy of Duryodhana who refused to return to the Pandavas even an iota of land, let alone their former kingdom. Seeing that the war was now quite unavoidable, Lord Krishna hastened to return from Hastinapur on the same day to report to the Pandavas.

Mystery about the First Day

On his way back while proceeding to the outskirts of Hastinapur, Krishna held a personal talk with Karna, trying to induce him to leave the Kaurava side and come over to the Pandavas (whose eldest step-brother Karna happened to be, being the pre-marital son of Kunti immediately deserted by her). Karna refused to change sides at that critical moment. Lord Krishna thereupon forthwith announced to Karna the next following *amāvāsyā* (new moon day) for starting the war. Describing the season and to some extent also the month Krishna said —

*brūyāḥ karna ito gatvā
dronaṁ śāntanavaṁ kṛpam
saumyoyaṁ vartate māsaḥ
suprāpayavasendhanah. —Udyoga Parva, 142/16*
*sarvausadhivanasphitah
phalavāṇalpamakṣikah
niṣpāṅko rasavattoyo
nātyuṣṇaśīśirah sukhaḥ. —17*
*saptamāt cāpi divasāt
amāvāsyā bhaviṣyati
saṅgrāmo yujyatām tasyām
tāmāhuḥ śakradevatām. —18*

“Karna, returning from here convey the following message to Drona, Bhishma, Kripacharya etc. The current month is of moderate climate, with cattle fodder as well as fuel easily available—16. The forests are full of all sort of vegetable growth, the trees laden with fruit, the flies reduced, the land is free of mud, water is clear and tasteful, and this pleasant season neither very hot nor very cold—17. After seven days there is coming the *amāvāsyā*. Let the war be started on that date. That *amāvāsyā* has Shakra (Indra) as its presiding deity—18.”

According to the system of months ending with *pūrṇimā*, that *amāvāsyā* was of the month of Margashirsha; while according to the system of months ending with *amāvāsyā*, it was of Kartika². The Mahabharata nowhere states that the war did not start on that *amāvāsyā*. Now it is indisputable that the Gita discourse took place on the very opening day of the war just before the fighting started. It should therefore be clear that according to the above remark of Krishna himself, the Gita discourse was delivered on the said *amāvāsyā*. How is it then that by a long tradition the Gita-Jayanti has come to be celebrated in India eleven days later than that *amāvāsyā*, i. e. on the eleventh (*ekādaśī*) of the bright half of Margashirsha.

The curious riddle here is that the poet has also stated later in his description of the war that on the XIV day of fighting the moon rose in the latter part of the night. Such a late moonrise is possible only in the second week of a dark fortnight. Now the problem that confronted the scholars was that if the *amāvāsyā* is taken as the starting date of the war, the XIV consecutive day from it falls in the bright fortnight, and in no case in the second week of the dark one! Therefore several writers arbitrarily shifted the opening date of war (i. e. the date of Gita-Jayanti) to the bright eleventh of Margashirsha, so that the XIV consecutive day from it may fall in the second week of the next dark fortnight, thus verifying the late moonrise. But there is no basis whatever in the Mahabharata text itself for any such alternate date. And not only does it disregard the abovesaid clear remark of Lord Krishna himself, but it is also not compatible (as shown below) with the date of Bhishma's death. Seeing this dilemma others, like Dr. K. L. Daftari of Nagpur³ and Dr. P. V. Kane of Bombay⁴, prefer to stick to the *amāvāsyā*, but treat all the detailed description of the moonrise as an interpolation. But there are no adequate grounds for that too. How then is all this to be reconciled? And so, though in social practice the Gita-Jayanti continued

2. The bright half coincides in both the systems, but the dark fortnight differs by a month. The two systems prevail in different parts of India. Which system does the Mahabharata follow? This itself is a problem. Some expressions in it apparently indicate the one system and some the other. I however feel that on close analysis it can be shown that the author of the Mahabharata had definitely the *amāvāsyā*-ending system in his view. To create a riddle on the point, the Mahabharata usually avoids naming the month when speaking of a dark fortnight. The reader will no doubt realise the great importance of a definite conclusion on this point; it will throw valuable light on the particular part of India, and the time, to which the poet himself belonged.

3. See "The Astronomical Method and its Application to the Chronology of ancient India", 1942 (Lectures delivered at the Nagpur University); specially pp. 125-129.

4. "History of Dharmashastra", Vol III, pp. 907-915.

and continues to be observed on the bright eleventh of Margashirsha, the basic date of the Mahabharata war had become a very serious problem for the scholars, leading some of them to remark as follows. "The fight over the date of the Mahabharata war is raging as stiff and furious as the Mahabharata war itself. But without winning this fight we cannot capture the citadel of Ancient Indian Chronology. We must, therefore, exert all our efforts to win it".—Dr. K. L. Daftari⁵.

The Days of Balarama's Pilgrimage

Next comes the problem of the duration of Balarama's pilgrimage. He was totally against the fratricidal family war, and also tried to dissuade his brother Krishna from participating in it in any way. Krishna had however agreed to act as the charioteer of Arjuna, though not to actually fight. Failing to persuade Krishna to completely withdraw from the war, Balarama immediately proceeded on a pilgrimage on the banks of the Saraswati river. The journey started on the same day on which Krishna declared the war date to Karna at Hastinapur and urgently reported it to the Pandavas at Upaplavya. The poet says very clearly that the moon was in Pushya constellation on that first day of the pilgrimage; and further that it ended on its fortysecond day on the last day of the war at the time of the final mace duel between Bhima and Duryodhana when the moon was in Shravana. There is the following observation of Balarama himself on this point:

*catvāriṃśat ahānyadya
dve ca me nisṛtasya vai
puṣyena samprayāto'smi
śravane punarāgataḥ —Shalya Parva, 34/6
śiṣyayorvai gadāyuddham
draṣṭukāmo'smi mādharma. —7*

"Today is the fortysecond day since I had left (on the pilgrimage). I had left when the constellation (of the moon) was Pushya and have now returned in the Shravana constellation. I wish to see the mace-duel between the two disciples of mine (Duryodhana and Bhima)." It had been a great problem so far how to count these fortytwo days. The journey had commenced seven days prior to the *amāvāsyā*. Therefore those who took that *amāvāsyā* as the starting date of the war added to the seven pre-war days the traditionally believed eighteen days of the war, but arrived thereby at only twentyfive days of the pilgrimage, whereas the

5. *Op. Cit.* p. 13. See also, "The whole of Indian history depends upon the date of the Mahabharata war, for the dates of accession of kings of the various Hindu dynasties are invariably calculated in all our Puranas and other works of authority from the time of the Mahabharata war."—T. S. Narayan Shastri (quoted by Prof. K. Shrinivasa Raghavan in "The Date of the Maha Bharata War and the Kali Yugadhi", p. 12).

Mahabharata clearly speaks of fortytwo days. As for advancing the war date to the next bright eleventh, that would increase the duration of the pilgrimage by only eleven more days, thus arriving at *thirtysix* days but still not fortytwo. It was also a further problem to reconcile the constellations, for Shravana is ahead of Pushya neither by twentyfive nor by thirtysix places. In desperation Dr. Daftari went to the extent of suggesting (op. cit. pp 7 and 117) that Pushya and Shravana in the above verse of Balarama may be interchanged; since Pushya is at the 41st place from Shravana, and according to the calculation of Dr. Daftari (assuming that the pilgrimage started right from Dwaraka about 22 or 23 days prior to the war—for which there is hardly any basis in the Mahabharata text) the total pilgrimage period can somehow be stretched to fortyone days. But even so, what about the clear mention of fortytwo in the first line of that verse? And besides, it is not only here but at many other places also that the Mahabharata definitely names Pushya as the *nakṣatra* on the day on which the pilgrimage started. Shall we substitute Shravana at all those places?

Another writer, Pandit Devakinandan Khedwal of Rajasthan, wants to reduce the fortytwo days to thirtyeight only⁶. It is interesting to note his argument. While he relies on the same verse quoted above, he wants to read in its second line *śravanena* in place of *śravanē*; and then dropping all reference therein to the *śravana* constellation as such, wants to see in it (since in Sanskrit *śravana* also means 'hearing') only a reference to Balarama 'having heard' about the impending mace duel from the sage Narada. Further he interprets the first line of the verse as meaning forty *minus* two, whereas the clear wording there is forty *plus* (*ca*) two. There is however hardly any justification for taking any such liberty with the original Mahabharata text accompanied by a laboured interpretation. As the reader will presently see, all the astronomical and chronological references in the said verse have now been completely explained.

Some other Problems

At the conclusion of the war, the victorious Pandavas did not hasten to enter the capital of Hastinapur all at once. Extremely virtuous, they first duly performed the funeral rites for all those killed in the war on either side; and then spent one full month on the river bank outside the city in observance of mourning. The Mahabharata specifically mentions it thus.

6. "Bhāratiya Kālagāṇā" (Hindi), p. 129-30.

*tatra te sumahātmāno
nyavasan paṇḍunandanāḥ
śaucam nivartayiṣyanto
māsamātram bahiḥpurāt.*

— Shanti Parva 1/2

"There the noble-minded Pandavas stayed on the outskirts of the city (of Hastinapur) for one month observing mourning." But ignorant of the true chronology of the Mahabharata war days, and therefore unable to account for the period of this full one month, writers (including those of old like the famous Sanskrit commentator Nilakantha, as also recent ones like Dr. S. K. Belvalkar⁷ of Poona) have been obliged to reduce the month to twelve days only.

So also the days and dates of the wonderful religious and philosophical discourse by Bhishma from his death-bed on the pointed arrows (incorporated in the Shanti Parva and the Anushasana Parva) have been a subject of serious dispute. While some scholars reckon its days as thirty, others as eight or eleven. Some have even suggested that this entire discourse is an interpolation. However, not only is it a part of the original composition, but the poet has also left subtle clues therein of its precise days and dates. The reader will see in the sequel these days now definitely ascertained.

Great Riddle of the Date of Bhishma's Death

And lastly there remains the master riddle regarding the very crucial date of Bhishma's death. This date is associated with an extremely important chronological clue; for as the Mahabharata states, Bhishma's death coincided with the commencement of the Uttarayana (turning of the sun towards the north) in that year. The correct date of his death therefore is very vital for determining the actual (or at any rate, the poet's intended) year of the Mahabharata war. Bhishma fell on the battlefield on the tenth day of fighting. But warding off immediate death by his will power he lay on the bed of arrows, awaiting as said above the auspicious commencement of Uttarayana. While Bhishma was thus passing his last days there occurred the rest of the war, the mourning for one month, then the coronation of Yudhishtira at Hastinapur and lastly the great discourse of Bhishma himself. When at the end of all these events, the appointed time of Bhishma's final departure arrived, he himself uttered the following words indicating the then date and time.

7. "The Mahabharata", published by Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona, Vol. 17, Part I, Introduction, p. LXXXII, footnote 2.

aṣṭapañcāśatām rātryaḥ
 śayānasyādya me gatāḥ
 śareṣu niśitāgreṣu
 yathā varṣaśatām tathā.

— Anushasana Parva, 167/27

māgho'yaṁ samanuprāpto
 māsaḥ saumyaḥ yudhiṣṭhira
 tribhāgaśeṣaḥ pakṣo'yaṁ
 śuklo bhavitumarhati.

— 28

“I have passed fiftyeight nights while lying on these highly pointed arrows; indeed this time has been almost like a hundred years—27. This, Yudhishtira, is the temperate month of Magha, and the fortnight bright; and it (i. e. the month as interpreted by some, or the fortnight according to others) is *tribhāgaśeṣaḥ*”. I have specially avoided translating the last phrase; for therein lies a curious riddle. That expression apparently means “of which three fourth portion is yet due to pass”; and has thus been so far generally interpreted.

Now, these verses clearly speak of the fiftyeight nights on the bed of arrows, the month of Magha and its bright fortnight. However with all their varied calculations, scholars have been battling hard to count these fiftyeight nights; and if somehow they did so, the date was seen to fall in the *dark* fortnight and not bright. Let us first refer to those who take the bright eleventh of Margashirsha as the starting date of the war. The consecutive tenth day from it falls on the fifth (*pañcamī*) of the next dark fortnight, which according to them is the date of Bhishma's fall on the battlefield. Now if fiftyeight nights are counted from there, the date of Bhishma's death must come in the *dark* fortnight two months ahead (which will be the month of Magha, only if one follows the *amāvāsya*-ending system), whereas Bhishma himself speaks of the bright fortnight.

To solve this difficulty some, like Nilakantha, reduce the number of the nights so as to somehow locate the date of Bhishma's death in the bright half of the month of Magha. Thus, to do so Nilakantha first resolves the single word *aṣṭapañcāśatām* into *aṣṭapañca aśatām*; and then interprets *aśatām* as less than hundred. As for the first word *aṣṭapañca*, he inverts the figures *aṣṭa* (eight) and *pañca* (five) so as to mean fiftyeight. The total expression thus means ‘less than hundred by fiftyeight’ i. e. fortytwo. Now the starting date of the war, according to Nilakantha, is not exactly the bright eleventh of Margashirsha, but its thirteenth or fourteenth. The date of the fall of Bhishma would then be the next dark eighth; and counting fortytwo nights from there, Nilakantha

arrives at the bright fifth of Magha as the date of Bhishma's death. But even so, neither that month nor the fortnight can on that date be said to be *tribhāgaśeṣaḥ* (i. e. one, of which one-fourth portion is over, with $\frac{3}{4}$ yet to pass). So Nilakantha interprets it as *tribhāgamātraḥ*, i. e. of which one-third portion is over; and then relates it to the fortnight.⁸

On the other hand, some writers, while not reducing the number of those nights, start counting them from the very first day of the war instead of the tenth on which Bhishma fell on the battlefield⁹. They take the first line of the verse to mean that fifty-eight nights had by then passed since Bhishma had last slept. It means that by the time of his death Bhishma had spent fiftyeight nights *without* sleep. They then contend that Bhishma had lost sleep not only from the time of his fall on the tenth day of the war, but also from the very first day of it due to his extreme worry as the Commander-in-Chief of the Kaurava army! However, how shall one get rid of the clear words *śareṣu niśitāgreṣu* in the latter half of the same verse, meaning ‘on (the bed) of pointed arrows’? That unmistakably refers to Bhishma's fall on the tenth day, from which time started his most tormenting lying on the horrible bed formed by the numerous pointed arrows that had entered his body during the fight on that day.

Still others, including the editors of the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute of Poona, counting all the fiftyeight nights from the fall of Bhishma arrive as said above in the dark half of Magha, and then helplessly insist that the dark fortnight itself may here be taken as the bright one. Here is the Institute's note on the point: “The statement *pakṣo'yaṁ śuklo bhavitumarhati* is intriguing. If the fortnight had actually been bright, Bhishma would have clearly said so. He would not have said that the *pakṣa* deserved to be regarded as *śukla*. The implication seems to be that the *pakṣa*, though not actually *śukla*, deserved to be regarded as *śukla*. And the reason for this is suggested by the word *tribhāgaśeṣaḥ*. The *pakṣa* was *kṛṣṇa*, but, since three parts of it had still remained—only one part having elapsed—it could as well be regarded as *śukla* (that is, as the continuation of *śukla*). The *kṛṣṇa pakṣa* was *tribhāgaśeṣa*, that is to say only one-fourth of it had elapsed. One-fourth of a fortnight is 3.75 days. Therefore the date indicated in

8. However, elsewhere in his commentary on the Mahabharata, instead of thus labouring hard to establish the bright *fifth*, Nilakantha prefers the bright *eighth* of Magha which is traditionally accepted as the date of Bhishma's death.

9. Vide Prof. K. S. Raghavan, *Op. Cit.* p. 19; also “Gita Pravachana—Gita Vyakhyanamala” (Hindi), by Pandit Giridhar Sharma Chaturvedi (Nepal Rajya Sanskrit Granthamala) Vol IV, 1962, pp 79-85.

(verse) 153/28 would correspond to *Māgha-kṛṣṇa-caturthī*.¹⁰ On this view Bhishma's death occurred on the fourth (*caturthī*) of the dark fortnight of the month of Magha; on which date that fortnight could be said to be *tribhāgaśeṣaḥ*, i. e. with its three-fourth portion yet to pass. The reader will however see below the secret meaning of *tribhāgaśeṣaḥ* as also *śuklo bhavitumarhati*, and in that light the correct date of Bhishma's death in the bright fortnight itself.

Coming to the view of those who stick to *amāvāsyā* as the starting date of the war, the date of Bhishma's fall is the bright ninth of Margashirsha. Counting fiftyeight nights from there it is possible to arrive at the bright eighth of Magha as the date of Bhishma's death, when the month (if not the fortnight) can be said to be *tribhāgaśeṣaḥ*, meaning that one week of it had passed with three more yet due (provided, again, one follows the *amāvāsyā*-ending system of months). It is on this basis that the said eighth is usually stated as the date of Bhishma's death in several Indian calendars.¹¹ But on this view the XIV successive day of war falls towards the close of the bright fortnight, which as already pointed out is not compatible with the late nocturnal moonrise.

10. See "Mahabharata, Vol. XVII, Anushasana Parva, Part I", Introduction p. LXXXIII-IV. Similar argument is also advanced by Mr. K. V. Abhyankar in his article "The Date and Time of the Mahabharata War" (Annals of the B. O. R. Institute, Vol. XXV, pp 116-136). But the date of Bhishma's death, according to him, is the dark fifth of Magha, on which day the fortnight can be said to complete one-third (not one-fourth) part. So he is also further obliged to interpret *tribhāgaśeṣaḥ* as *tribhāgamātraḥ*. See: "Although the day (dark 5th of Magha) on which he passed was a day of the dark fortnight, still, because only a third of that dark fortnight was gone and two-thirds still remained, it was looked upon as a supplement of the bright or first fortnight."
11. And with a surprising disregard for inconsistency, these calendars also mention the Gita-Jayanti, not on the said *amāvāsyā*, but on the bright eleventh of Margashirsha. One very old mention of the bright eighth of Magha as the date of Bhishma's death is found in the expression *māghamāse sitāṣṭamī* in the "Bharata Savitri", an anonymous short versical composition in Sanskrit. But the "Bharata Savitri" itself locates Bhishma's fall on the battlefield on the dark seventh following the bright fortnight of Margashirsha; from which fiftyeight nights are not over by the bright eighth of Magha. Therefore sometimes *sitā* in the above expression is read as *ṣitā* i. e. *asitā*, meaning the dark fortnight (of the month of Magha). But this conflicts with the clear mention of the 'right fortnight' in the Mahabharata text. In fact it is extremely difficult to fix the original reading of the Bharata Savitri verses, which are mainly available through quotations in other works (vide "History of Dharmashastra", by Dr. Kane, Vol. III, pp 909-10, footnote 1773). As for the authenticity of the Bharata Savitri composition, see the following observations of Mr. K. V. Abhyankar, in his above quoted article: "The evidence of the Bharatasavitri, which is older than the commentators and later than Sauti is certainly more reliable than any other evidence, provided it does not conflict with any Mahabharata passage". (Italics mine)

In the end, Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Giridhar Sharma Chaturvedi plainly concludes that a complete solution of this dilemma is not possible; since either the numerical references in the Mahabharata text contain some secret code which no one so far has been able to decipher fully, or some inaccuracies have crept into them due to scribal errors¹². In the same strain of despair Mr. C. V. Vaidya, the celebrated scholar of Maharashtra on Mahabharata remarks: "If the Mahabharata war is deemed to have started on the bright thirteenth of the month of Margashirsha, Bhishma's fall would be on the dark eighth of Margashirsha, fiftyeight nights from where would lead us to the dark eighth of Magha. How is this riddle to be resolved? ... How to account for this inconsistency? It is almost impossible to explain it. If the war is deemed to have started not in the month of Margashirsha, but on the *amāvāsyā* of the month of Kartika, according to the statement of Krishna, there results all the more confusion.... There cannot occur the late nocturnal moonrise on the day of Jayadratha's death; that day would probably fall on the full moon day (*pūrṇimā*) or the bright fourteenth, which means that towards its dawn the moon instead of rising would set leaving behind darkness. If the bright eighth of Margashirsha is taken as the starting date of the war, one can count the fiftyeight days, but then the eighteenth day from it would not have the *śravaṇa* constellation as stated by Balaram. ... All this confusion has been caused by these statements about fiftyeight nights and fifty nights in the Anushasana Parva. The bright fortnight may be said to extend in the dark fortnight till the fifth (*pañcamī*); but the fortnight cannot be said on that date to be *tribhāgaśeṣa*. Fiftyeight nights mean about two months. So one cannot but arrive at the dark eighth of Magha. To sum up, we shall have to reject some one of these statements—either those in the actual description of the war (i. e. the Bhishma Parva, Drona Parva, Karna Parva, Shalya Parva) or those in the Anushasana Parva. One has to accept that this conflict is inevitable"¹³. Similar views have been expressed by Dr. P. V. Kane (*op. cit*) and several others.

Secret of the Mahabharata War Account

However, all these as well as some other riddles have now been satisfactorily resolved in the light of certain basic secrets of the Mahabharata epic. One vital secret of these is that the poet has based his voluminous war account on his wonderful idea that the actual fighting took place on *alternate* days. It is on that basis that he has calculated all the war time dates; and yet with rare literary skill concealed it

12. *Op. Cit.*

13. Vide "Mahabharatacha Upasamhara" (Marathi), pp. 127-28.

behind a vast camouflage of ambiguous and seemingly inconsistent expressions. He has at the same time left enough subtle clues which on close study clearly point out the intervening blank days.

The Mahabharata describes in details the changing army formations (*vyūhas*) on each day of fighting by both the sides. The technical military names of these formations are also scrupulously given. Thus the Pandavas arranged their army on the II day of the war in the *krauñcārūṇa* formation; on the III day in the *ardhacandrākāra* (semi-moon shaped) formation; on the V day in the *śyena* formation; on the VI in the *makara* formation; on the VII in the *vajra* formation; on the VIII in the *syṅgātaka* formation; on the XI again in the *krauñca* formation; and on the XII in the *maṇḍalārdha* formation. On the other side the Kaurava army formations are named as *garuda* on the III day; *vyāla* on the IV; *makara* on the V; *krauñca* on the VI; *maṇḍala* on the VII; a vast terrible *mahāvvyūha* on the VIII; *sarvatobhadra* on the IX; and *śakata* on the XI day. On the XII day of fight the war took place in two different sections of the battle field; Drona led the Kaurava army in one section arranging the fighters in the *garuda* formation, while Susharma led in the other section with the army in the *candrākāra-ratha-vyūha* formation (i. e. with the chariots arranged in a moonlike shape). On the XIII day of fighting the Kaurava army was arranged by Drona in the famous *cakravyūha* (wheel shaped) formation, which Arjuna's young son Abhimanyu knew only how to break through but not to come out of, and which therefore brought about his tragic death.

Now, the army on each side was a very vast one. The war used to start by sunrise (and once or twice started even before that). After the close of the fighting on one day, the rehearsals of these daily changing formations were obviously necessary, so that by the sunrise of the next fighting day the armies could immediately arrange themselves in the desired order on the battlefield. When could these rehearsals have taken place except on the intervening blank days? Surely an army thoroughly exhausted by the daylong fighting could not have held them in the dead of the night and be again ready for fresh fighting by the next sunrise. Besides, it was on these very blank days that the fighters must have got the necessary rest and medical treatment; and the battered battalions regrouped.

Further, after the fall of Bhishma on the tenth day, Drona was installed as the Commander-in-Chief of the Kaurava army; after Drona, Karna; and after him, Shalya. The poet has intentionally described in details these formal installations with full religious ceremonies in the presence of the army. The installation of Drona is thus described:

athābhīṣiṣicurdronam
duryodhanamukhā nṛpāḥ
saināpatye yathā skandam
purā śakramukhā surāḥ. —Drona Parva, 7/6

tato vāditraghoṣeṇa
śaṅkhānām ca mahāsvanaiḥ
prādurāsīt kṛte droṇe
harṣaḥ senāpatau tadā. —7

tataḥ punyāhaghoṣeṇa
svastivādasvanena ca
saṁstavairgītaśabdaiśca
sūtamāgadhavandinām. —8

jayaśabdairdvi-jāgryānām
subhagānartitaistathā
satkṛtya vidhinā droṇam
menire pāṇḍavān-jitān. —9

"Then Duryodhana along with the other kings on his side performed the installation ceremony of Drona, just as in the bygone days Indra and the other gods had installed Skanda as their Commander-in-Chief — 6. At that time Drona assumed the high office of the Commander-in-chief to the accompaniment of the sound of musical instruments as also conch-shells, filling the hearts of all with joy — 7. Honouring Drona on the occasion with due religious rites like *punyāhavācana* and *svastivācana*, eulogies sung by the courtiers and attendants, blessings of the priests in the form of *jaya* (victory) expressions, as also the dances of dancing girls, the Kauravas felt assured in their minds about their ultimate victory over the Pandavas — 8, 9."

Similarly the installation of Karna is also described in details.

saināpatyena satkartum
karnaṁ skandamivāmarāḥ
tato'bhīṣiṣicuḥ karnaṁ
vidhidṛṣṭeṇa karmaṇā. —Karna Parva, 10/43

duryodhanamukhā rājan
rājāno vijayaishinaḥ
śatakumbhamayaḥ kumbhair-
māheyaiścābhimantritaiḥ. —44

toyapurnaviṣaṇaiśca
dvīpakhadgamaharṣabhaiḥ
maṇimuktāyutascānyaiḥ
pūnyagandhaistathauśadhaiḥ. —45

audumbare sukhāsina –
māsane kṣaumasamvṛte
śāstradr̥ṣṭena vidhinā
sāmbharaiśca susambhṛtaiḥ. — 46

brāhmaṇāḥ kṣatriyā vaiśyās –
tathā sūdraśca sammatāḥ
tuṣṭuvustāṁ mahātmānaṁ
abhiṣiktaṁ varāsane. — 47

tato' bhiṣikte rajendra
niṣkairgobhirdhanena ca
vācayāmāsa viprāgryān
rādheyaḥ paravirahā. — 48

“Just as the gods had (in the bygone days) installed Skanda as their Commander-in-Chief, the Kaurava kings led by Duryodhana, eager for victory, desired to honour Karna by installing him as the Commander-in-Chief; and with that view performed his installation ceremony with religious rites. Pots of gold as also earth were filled with holy water for being sprinkled over Karna. Water was also separately kept in other utensils made of ivory, rare horns and the like; which also contained pearls etc. Several sacred scented articles as also plants were mixed with the same. Seated with great pleasure on a majestic dias of *audumbara* wood covered with soft silk, the great Karna was duly installed with all the above material accompanied by the scriptural rites, and then eulogised by the brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas as well as respected shudras. When the installation ceremony was over, Karna, the terror of his enemies, bestowed golden coins, cows and other wealth on leading brahmin priests, who in turn expressed their blessings to him.”

When, again, could such installations have been held except on the blank days? ¹⁴ Surely, not at midnight intervening between two fighting days, depriving the exhausted army of its well earned rest. Sanjaya, the war reporter of Dhritarashtra, gave his first report after Bhishma's fall. It covered first ten days of fighting. Sanjaya had specially gone to deliver the report at Hastinapur from the battlefield. This report included the famous Gita discourse also—which may be said to be its first public announcement. Sanjaya delivered the report on the blank day following the day of Bhishma's fall ¹⁵; returning immediately to Kurukshetra for the next day of fighting.

One Exception to Blank Days

Though each day of actual war was followed by a day of rest (for

14. There is proof of this in the Mahabharata; partly explained below.
 15. There is proof of this too in the Mahabharata.

which further proofs are also given in the sequel), there was however one exception to it. The XIV day of fight had no day of rest following it. The reason? On that day Arjuna (to avenge the killing of his son Abhimanyu), true to his word, killed Jayadratha before sunset; but the fighting continued thereafter through the dark night. Even torches were used to shed light, of which there is a very graphic description by the poet. But by midnight both sides were thoroughly exhausted; and out of sheer mercy for all, Arjuna on behalf of the Pandavas proposed that both armies may snatch a little rest on the field itself and resume fighting with the rise of the moon in the latter part of the night. Seeing the condition of even the Kaurava army its chief commander Drona also agreed; and accordingly both the armies, expressing heartfelt gratitude for Arjuna, rested a while on the field itself and resumed the fighting with the moonrise ¹⁶.

However Duryodhana, the Kaurava chief, already depressed by the death of Jayadratha, remonstrated Drona very bitterly for having accepted the enemy's proposal for rest. Said he—

na marṣaṇīyāḥ sāṅgrāme
viśramantaḥ śramānvitāḥ
sapatnā glānamanaso
labdhalakṣyā viśeṣataḥ. —Drona Parva, 185/2

yattu marṣitamasmābhīr-
bhavataḥ priyakāmyayā
ta ete pariviśrāntāḥ
pāṇḍavā balavattarāḥ. —3

sarvathā parihīnāḥ sma
tejasā ca balena ca
bhavatā pālyamānāste
vivardhante punaḥ punaḥ. —4

sa bhavān marṣayetyetāṁs-
tvatto bhītān viśeṣataḥ
śiṣyatvaṁ vā puraskṛtya
mama vā mandabhāgyatām. —8

“In a war the enemy, specially one extremely able in fighting, when very tired and so losing zest is desirous of rest, deserves no generosity—185/2. The generosity shown by us to the enemy at this time is only due to your (inward) sympathy for their good; as a result of which these Pandava warriors now having comfortably rested are again full of added

16. The reader will remember that this is the same moon-rise that has been bothering scholars while fixing the starting date of the war. The very beautiful description of this moon-rise given in the Mahabharata is quoted below.

vigour—3. While our power and valour is quite on the decline, these Pandavas on the contrary, thanks to your protection, are becoming more and more powerful—4. (Though you are the complete master of the art of fighting) these Pandavas, who in their hearts are in fact afraid to face you in war, are being shown generosity by you, either because of their being your earstwhile pupils, or may be due to my own ill luck—8." Extremely hurt by these biting words of Duryodhana, Drona immediately promised that the fighting which was then being resumed (with the moonrise) would be continued by him without any more interim adjournment till final victory (or death).

*nihatya sarvapāncālān
yuddhe kṛtvā parakramam —12
vimokṣye kavacān rājan
satyenāyudhamālabhe. —13*

" Oh King (Duryodhana), swearing by my bow and verily in the name of truth I promise that from now onwards I will not take off my shield (and weapons etc.) until with highest bravery on the battle-field I totally destroy the Panchalas." While the horrible war resumed after moonrise in the latter part of that night was thus in progress, soon there approached the dawn, when all the fighters uttered invocations for a few minutes, and again continued the fight.

*atha candraprabhām muṣṇan
ādityasya puraḥsarah
aruṇo'bhyudayāmcakre
tāmrīkurvannivāmbaram. —186/2
tato rathāśvāmsca manuṣyayānān
utsṛjya sarve kurupaṇḍuyodhāḥ
divākarasyābhimukhān japantāḥ
sandhyāgatāḥ prañjalayo babhuvuḥ. —4
tato dvaidhikṛte sainye
dronaḥ somakapāṇḍavān
abhyadravat sapāncālān
duryodhanapurogamah. —5*

" Thereafter approached the dawn, herald of actual sunrise, reducing the moonlight to faintness and covering the sky with a reddish hue — 2. At that moment all the Kaurava as well as Pandava warriors left their chariots, horses and other human conveyances (palanquins etc.), and turning their faces in the direction of the rising sun started invoking the dawn with folded hands — 4. Thereafter Drona divided his army into two parts, and marching ahead of Duryodhana (i. e. in the clear view of Duryodhana) attacked the Somaka, Pandava and Panchala warriors—5."

Soon the dawn was duly followed by the actual sunrise, but both the armies remained on the battle field itself.

*tathā sāmsaktayuddham tat
abhavad bhr̥śadāruṇam
atha sandhyāgataḥ sūryaḥ
kṣaṇena samapadyata. — 186/60
te tathaiva mahārāja
daṁṣitā raṇamūrdhani
sandhyāgatān sahasrāṁśuṁ
ādityaṁ upatasthire. — 187/1
udite tu sahasraṁśau
taptakāncanasaprabhe
prakāṣiteṣu lokeṣu
punāryuddhamavartata. — 2
dvandvāni tatra yānyāsan
sāmsaktāni purodayāt
tānyevābhyudite sūrye
samasaṁjanta bhārata. — 3.*

" While that extremely terrible war was thus being fought, in a few moments there approached morn with the rise of the sun — 186/60. Oh King (Dhritarashtra), at that time all the warriors retaining as before their shields (and weapons etc.) started invoking the morning sun on the battlefield itself — 187/1. When the disc of the sun gleaming like hot gold rose fully above the horizon shedding its light all around, the war again started — 2. Those very warriors who were locked in duels prior to the sunrise again respectively confronted each other after the sunrise—3."

Thus according to this graphic description given by the poet the fighting continued on the XIV day throughout the night, and even after the close of that night straightway entered the XV day without any intervening blank day of rest. Ultimately Drona met his death on that day on the field of battle.

Last Day of the War

However the master poet compensated this absence of one blank day by another very curious arrangement. It is so commonly believed that the final mace duel between Bhima and Duryodhana culminating in the latter's death took place literally on the same day as the death of Shalya. By certain ambiguous expressions the poet has created that illusion. But a close study of the verses reveals that the mace duel took place on the *next* day. On the day on which Shalya was killed in the war at about noon, the Kaurava army was thoroughly routed thereafter and fled away. Duryodhana himself left the field and hid under

the water in a lake. It was in the early night of that day, after sunset, that the Pandavas happened to get a trace of the hiding. They came to the lake and challenged Duryodhana to come out and give fight. Duryodhana replied from inside the lake. The conversation lasted for a considerable time. And the secret is that by the time Duryodhana came out to fight with Bhima in the mace duel, the night had ended and the next day dawned. Just at this time Balarama was induced by Narada to terminate his pilgrimage and go to witness the duel between Bhima and Duryodhana, both of whom were Balarama's disciples. The duel took place for about half the day, when Duryodhana hit by a deadly stroke of Bhima on the thigh fell down. Now, adding up the actual fighting for half the day on each of these two successive dates, the poet completed the last XVIII day of actual fight and thus created one more wonderful riddle!

Apart from concealing the close of the night in the description of the events preceding the mace duel, the poet has also employed some more verbal ambiguities to create a confusion on this point. At the beginning of the Shalya Parva there is a preliminary summary of the concluding portion of the war. Relating first that Shalya was killed by Yudhishtira *madhyānhe* i. e. at noon after which Duryodhana left the field and hid in the lake, the Mahabharata immediately adds—

*athāparānhe tasyānhaḥ
parivārya suyodhanah
rhadadāhūya yuddhāya
bhīmasenena pātitaḥ.*

—Shalya Parva, 1/12

This verse has traditionally been interpreted to mean that in the afternoon (*aparānhe*) of that same day (*tasyānhaḥ*) Duryodhana was struck down by Bhima. But the later detailed description in the Shalya Parva itself reveals that on the day of Shalya's death the Pandavas had no trace at all of the hiding Duryodhana till night fall. Before proceeding further, it will be better to consider here that account of the events which happened on the day of Shalya's death after he was killed. When Shalya died on the battlefield, the Kaurava army was completely demoralised and routed. Sanjaya (who fought in that war on the Kaurava side) was made a prisoner. However, Vyasa himself appeared at the moment on the scene; and under his directions Sanjaya was released. Thereafter Sanjaya, deprived of his weapons and shield, left for Hastinapur. There is a clear mention of *sāyānha* (evening) at that time.

*anuñātastvahaṁ tena
nyastavarmā nirāyudhaḥ
prātiṣṭhaṁ yena nagaram
sāyānhe rudhīroḥṣitaḥ.*

—Shalya Parva, 29/41

"Thus let off by them, and my shield and weapons removed, I (Sanjaya) left for the city (of Hastinapur) at the evening time, with blood coming out of my body".

When Sanjaya walked two miles he met Duryodhana standing alone. Seeing each other in that miserable plight, both were filled with extreme grief, and for a few moments could utter no words. Then Sanjaya related to Duryodhana the closing account of the war. Hearing it, Duryodhana gave a message to Sanjaya for his father Dhritarashtra; and then entered the nearby Dvaipayana lake in the presence of Sanjaya.

*evamuktivā mahārāja
prāviśat taṁ mahārhadam
astambhayata toyam ca
māyayā manujādhipaḥ.*

—29/54

"Having said so, the King (Duryodhana) entered that great lake, and stilled its water charging it with his supernatural powers."

Thus when Sanjaya saw Duryodhana alone and alive at the evening time, and the latter's entry into the lake took place after it, how could the mace duel between him and Bhima happen in the *aparānha* i. e. afternoon period (which occurs before the *sāyānha* i. e. evening)?

After Duryodhana hid himself in the lake, there came on the spot Ashvatthama with Kripacharya and Kritavarma. Sanjaya pointed out to them Duryodhana's hiding place. Seeing that plight of the mighty Duryodhana, the three felt extreme grief. However, just then seeing that the Pandavas were also coming in that direction in their extensive search of Duryodhana, the three silently left the place in their chariots along with Sanjaya and proceeded towards the Kaurava camp. All the guards of the camp were weeping at the news of the destruction of the Kauravas. By this time the sun had already set.

*te tu mām rathamāropya
kṛpasya supariṣkṛtām
senāniveśamājagmur—
hataśeṣāstrayo rathāḥ
tatra gulmāḥ paritrastāḥ
sūrye cāstamite sati
sarve vicukruśuḥ srutvā
putrānām tava sankṣayam.*

—29/63

—29/64

—65

"Seating me (Sanjaya) on the well furnished chariot of Kripacharya, the three surviving warriors came to the camp of the (Kaurava) army. The sun had set by that time and the guards of that camp, filled with

fear at the news of the complete rout of your sons (i. e. the Kauravas) were all weeping aloud".

On the other hand seeing no one by the lakeside, the tired Pandavas also returned to their own camps for rest. Thus by the sunset there was no confrontation at all between Duryodhana and the Pandavas. In the meantime Yuyutsu took the wailing Kaurava ladies from the camps to Hastinapur. While referring to their reaching Hastinapur, the poet has again made a mention of the sunset.

*taīścaiva sahitaḥ kṣipram-
astam gacchati bhāskare* —29/87

*praviṣṭo hāstinapuram
vāṣṭpakāṇṭho'srulocanaḥ.* —88

"While the sun was setting fast, he (Yuyutsu) with his throat choked and eyes full of tears, entered the city of Hastinapur along with them". In the account of the day's tragic happenings related by Yuyutsu on that night at Hastinapur, there was naturally no mention of the mace duel which had not at all taken place by then.

When the Pandavas left the lake, Ashvatthama along with Kritavarma and Kripacharya slowly returned there. They called Duryodhana and started talking with him. The sun had already set before this. While their conversation was going on, however, some hunters tired by daylong labours happened to approach the lake for drinking water. In the darkness of that early night Ashvatthama and his companions could not notice their arrival. But the hunters themselves could know from that conversation the hiding of Duryodhana in that lake. With the hope of getting money they directly went to the Pandava camp and conveyed the news. With that information, the Pandavas again returned to the lake. Seeing them coming, Ashvatthama etc. left the place and Duryodhana again lay silently inside the lake. But this time the Pandavas challenged him to come out. We have already referred above to this conversation of theirs.

It is therefore clear from all this account given by Sanjaya in the later chapters of the Shalya Parva, that there was no question of the Bhima-Duryodhana mace duel happening in the *aparāṇḥa* (afternoon) of the day of Shalya's death. How is it then that in the opening chapter of the same Shalya Parva there occur the words *athāparāṇḥe tasyāṇḥaḥ* with reference to the mace duel? Is some one of these two conflicting observations an interpolation? Not so! The only verbal secret here is that the master poet has used *aparāṇḥe* in this verse not in the sense of the afternoon, but as a composite word *apara anhe* meaning "on the

next day"!¹⁷ Thus the verse really means that Duryodhana was struck down by Bhima 'on the *next day* of (after) that day'. This removes the apparent conflict between the opening portion of the Shalya Parva and its later portions. By cleverly employing the ambiguous expression *aparāṇḥe* immediately after *madhyāṇḥe*, the poet could easily confuse the readers, whose mind in that special context could not entertain any idea of the other unusual meaning of it.

Here is another interesting verbal ambiguity in the same connection, and this time at the very beginning of the Mahabharata. Summarising the entire war period in but three verses, the poet says—

*ahāni yuyudhe bhīṣmo
daśaiva paramāstravit
ahāni pañca droṇastu
rarakṣa kuruvāhinīm.* —Adi Parva, 2/30

*ahāni yuyudhe dve tu
karnaḥ parabalārdanaḥ
śalyo'rḍhadivasam caiva
gadāyuddham ataḥ param.* —31

*tasyaiva divasasyānte
drauṇihārdikyagautamāḥ
prasuptam niśi viśvastam
jaghnuryaudhiṣṭhiram balam.* —32

"Bhishma, the great veteran in the art of war, fought for ten days; and Drona was in charge of the Kaurava army for five days—30. Karna, the mighty warrior, fought for two days; and Shalya for half the day; after that took place the mace duel—31. At the close of the same day, the remnants of Yudhishtira's army, soundly sleeping in perfect confidence of victory, were massacred by Drona's son Ashvatthama assisted by Kripacharya and Kritavarma—32". Now, as a close reading of these verses will show, all that the poet in fact says here is that the mace duel took place *after* the half-day fighting by Shalya (as the commander-in-chief), but not that it happened on one and the same date. It is only proceeding further that he adds that the nocturnal massacre by Ashvatthama took place on the same day as the mace duel; which is quite correct also. And yet the poet has so skilfully put the three events one after other in close succession, that he could easily create the illusion about all the three events happening on one and the same date. And on the top of that, the illusion lasting for centuries could not be broken

17. The poet uses *aparāṇḥaḥ* in another unusual sense somewhat similar to this in the following verse also. *aparāṇḥe'parāṇḥolsya sūtaputrasya māriṣa, chinna māñjalikenāyau soṣedhamapatatcchiraḥ* (Karna Parva 91/64).

through, because in his calculation of the actual fighting days, the past-master of riddles included the half day of Shalya's fighting and the next half day of the mace duel between Bhima and Duryodhana under one and the same last eighteenth day of actual fight!

A Line, which is not Interpolation

Here is an example of how hard this illusion has been even in the minds of scholars. In one line in the Shalya Parva the poet has left a clear proof of the fact that the mace duel took place on the *next* day after the death of Shalya. But due to the said illusion, that line itself has been taken as an interpolation. The Shalya Parva contains a very detailed account of Balarama's pilgrimage including even the names of the religious places he visited in serial order. Starting from Prabhasa, Chamasodbheda, Udapana, Vinashana etc, the list contains about thirty-six such places. In the last lap of this journey, Balarama was at a place named Vriddha-Kanya-Kshetra, where he learnt the news of the death of Shalya.

tatrasthacāpi śuśrāva
hataṁ śalyaṁ halāyudhaḥ. —Shalya Parva, 52/26

tatrāpi datvā dānāni
dvi-jātibhyaḥ parantapaḥ
śuśrāva śalyaṁ saṅgrāme
nihataṁ pāṇḍavaistadā. —27

samantapañcakadvārāt
tato niṣkrāmya mādhabaḥ
papraccharṣigaṇān rāmaḥ
kurukṣetrasya yatphalam. —28

"At that place Balarama, the terror of his enemies, came to know of the death of Shalya. There too he gave several charities to the brahmins while he heard about the death of Shalya in the war at the hands of the Pandavas. Then leaving that place by the Samantapanchaka exit, Balarama enquired from the sages the good earned by residing in Kurukshetra." Obviously this must relate to the afternoon or evening of the day of Shalya's death. The very significant mentions here of Samantapanchaka and Kurukshetra indicate that at this time Balarama was just in the vicinity of the battlefield. From there he immediately proceeded to Vishnu Ashrama, Plakshaprasavana and Karapavana. At the last place he spent a night.

samprāptaḥ kārāpavanam
pravaram tirthamuttamam
halāyudhastatra cāpi
datvā dānam mahābalaḥ. —54/12

āplutaḥ salile punye
śuśīte vimale śucau
santarpayāmāsa pitṛn
devaṁśca raṇadurmadaḥ. —13

tatroṣyaikān tu rajanīm
yatibhirbrāhmaṇaiḥ saha
mitrāvaruṇayoḥ punyaṁ
jagāmāśramamacyutaḥ. —14

"Then reaching the very holy place of Karapavana, the great Balarama offered charities there also—12. Bathing in the very cold, clear and holy waters of that place, that great warrior made religious offerings to the departed forefathers as well as the gods—13. Then spending a night there, Balarama proceeded to the holy hermitage of Mitravaruna along with the sages and brahmins—14." This clear mention of the night at this place is of crucial importance. Because it was after this night that Balarama went from Karapavana to Mitravaruna, where taking a bath in the Yamuna he was holding a religious discourse, when the sage Narada came there and invited him to witness the mace duel between Bhima and Duryodhana that was then about to start. Thereupon Balarama immediately terminated the pilgrimage and hastened to the site of the duel, which then started at that early morning time in his presence. A night had thus elapsed between Shalya's death and the mace duel; obviously proving that the duel took place on the next day after the former event.

In spite of this, however, obsessed by the illusion that the two events happened on the same date, and seeing the complete inconsistency with it of the mention of Balarama spending one night at Karapavana after he heard the news of Shalya's death, some scribes of the Mahabharata text started deleting the above line itself (first half of verse 14) containing that reference. And finally the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute of Poona also, in its Critical Edition of the Mahabharata, has treated the line as doubtful. But our entire discussion above should suffice to convince the reader that the said line which is of great chronological significance must be from the original Mahabharata text itself. Had it not been so, there was no reason why any one afterwards should have been interested in inserting such a line of his own, saying that Balarama spent one night at Karapavana. It may be added here that in that account of the pilgrimage there are also other mentions of Balarama spending a night at such places as Chamasodbheda, Saptasarasvata and Taijasa.

Had the scholars of Mahabharata been in the know of this secret difference of one date between the death of Shalya and the mace duel,

they would have counted the entire war period at least as nineteen dates instead of eighteen, even if the intervening blank days are kept out of consideration.

True Date of the Start of the War

All this now resolves so many longstanding problems concerning the chronology of the Mahabharata war. True, the poet repeats that the war lasted for eighteen days. But its secret is that it is the actual fighting period. To count the total *tithis* i. e. dates, a blank day has to be interspersed after each day of actual fight, except of course the last. Thus there will be seventeen intervening days. Further as shown above, though there was one blank day less, the last one day of fight actually extended over two successive dates. The total war period thus covers thirtyfive days!

In the light of this, here is now the complete clarification of the days of Balarama's pilgrimage. It had started seven days prior to the war. If we now add to these seven days the thirtyfive days of the war period, the conclusion of that pilgrimage exactly falls on the fortysecond day, as stated in the Shalya Parva by Balarama himself. The constellations stated by him also exactly tally with the number of the days. Shravana is at the fifteenth place from Pushya; and so after first completing one full round of twentyseven constellations, it would be in the second round just at the fortysecond place from Pushya.

Thus the starting date of the war i. e. the correct Gitajayanti date, is nothing else but the *amāvāsyā*, as stated by Lord Krishna himself. On its 19th day (including the nine blank days), falling on the third (*trītiyā*) of the following dark fortnight, Bhishma was struck down. On the twelfth (*dvādaśī*) of that dark fortnight falls the XIV day of actual fighting. Needless to add, the moon rose on that dark twelfth late in the latter part of the night; and that riddle is also now resolved. The following beautiful description of that moonrise is by none else but the master poet himself; and there is no reason to treat it as a later interpolation.

tataḥ kumudanāthena
kaminīgaṇḍapāṇḍunā
netrānandena candreṇa
māhendrī digalāṅkṛtā. —Drona Parva, 184/46
daśaśatākṣakakubdariniḥśṛtaḥ
kīraṇakesarabhāsurapīṇjaraḥ
timiravāraṇayūthavidāraṇaḥ
samudiyādudayācalakesarī. —47

haravṛṣottamagātrasamadyutiḥ
smaraśarāsanapūrṇasamaprabhaḥ
navavadhūsmītacārumaṇcharaḥ
pravīṣṭaḥ kumudākarabāṇdhavaḥ. —48
tato muhūrtāt bhagavān
purastāt śaśalakṣaṇaḥ
aruṇaṁ darśayāmāsa
grasaṇ jyotiḥprabhāḥ prabhuh. —49
aruṇasya tu tasyānu
jātarūpasamaprabhaṁ
raśmījālaṁ mahat candro
mandam mandamavāsrjat. —50
utsārayantaḥ prabhayā
tamaste candrarāśmayaḥ
paryagacchaṇśanaḥ sarvā
diśaḥ khaṁ ca kṣitīm tathā. —51
tato muhūrtāt bhuvanaṁ
jyotirbhūtamivābhavat
aprakhyamaprakāśaṁ ca
jagāmāsu tamastathā. —52
yathā candrodayodbhūtaḥ
kṣubhitaḥ sagaro'bhavat
tathā candrodayodbhūtaḥ
sa babhūva balāṇavaḥ. —55
tataḥ pravavṛte yuddhaṁ
punareva viśāmpate
loke lokavīṇāśāya
paraṁ lokamabhīpsatām. —56

“Thereafter the moon, cynosure of the eyes, Lord of the white lotus, fair as the rosy cheeks of a beautiful damsel, adorned the direction of East (ruled over by God Indra)—46. Resembling a mighty lion coming out of a cave, the moon appeared on the top of the Udayachala (eastern) mountain emerging out of the Eastern direction (of which the thousand-eyed Indra is the Lord). Shedding its reddish yellow rays which resembled the lion's long mane, the moon began to dispel the darkness which appeared as a hoard of black elephants put to flight by the lion—47. The moon, friend of the white lotus lake, shining as the (white) body of God Shankara's divine bull, emitting full lustre like that of the (white) flowery bow of God Kamadeva, and appearing beautiful and attractive as the soft smile of a newly wed bride, began to slowly shed light in all directions—48. A few minutes later Lord

Moon began to exhibit reddish light reducing that of the stars to faintness—49. Following that reddish light the moon began to gradually spread a vast network of golden rays—50. Those rays of the moon dispelling the darkness by their light began to slowly envelop all the directions, the earth as also the sky—51. Then a few minutes later the entire scene became aglow with light. Darkness vanished completely, leaving no trace behind—52. Even as the rise of the moon causes the tide in the ocean, with the rise of the moon on that occasion the vast army began to stir and move—55. And then started again that fierce fight between warriors willing even to lay down their lives, a prelude to the terrible destruction of humanity—56”.

All this is clearly the description of an actual moonrise on the eastern horizon, perfectly fitting in the real chronology of the Mahabharata war; and is not a mere allegorical description of the moon emerging out of the clouds, as some have even tried to suggest in their desperate attempt to explain it away.

The poet kept in his mind this wonderful idea of the blank days of the war; and while concealing it in a network of ambiguous expressions, counted the dates on that basis. Due to it numerous illusions of irreconcilable inconsistencies and riddles have been created in the Mahabharata's description of the war.

Starting 'Nakṣatra' of the War

In which constellation was the moon on the starting date of the war? This also has been a subject of much dispute among the scholars. The poet has left an important clue on this point. In the declaration of the war date by Shri Krishna the *amāvāsyā* is described as *śakradevatām* i. e. having God Indra (Shakra) as its deity. The presiding deities of each constellation are given in ancient Indian works.

Dr. Kane and Dr. Daftari who regard the *amāvāsyā* as the starting date of the war take its constellation as Jyeshthā. Prof. K. Srinivasa Raghavan¹⁸ also, though he looks to that *amāvāsyā* as the starting date not of the war itself but of its 'preparations', regards Jyeshthā as its constellation. While these writers refer to the Udyoga Parva in support of that constellation, there is no mention of the Jyeshthā as such either in the Udyoga Parva or anywhere else in the entire Mahabharata. All that the Udyoga Parva verse (quoted above) says is that the *amāvāsyā* had Indra as its deity. And Jyeshthā is a constellation having that deity. Hence the inference. But it is beyond dispute that this *amāvāsyā* was seven days ahead of the day on which Lord Krishna declared the war

18. Op. Cit.

date. The constellation on the date of that declaration has been repeatedly stated in the Mahabharata as Pushya, from which Jyeshthā is ten places ahead. Now, is it possible for the moon to cross ten places in seven days? That can happen only if we assume the drop (*lopa*) of three *nakṣatras* within just a week; which is quite impossible. The story of the Mahabharata plot may for all that we know be a mere creation of the poet's fancy. But the subtle astronomical references intentionally introduced by him therein (may be, to give the story a dress of history) are certainly not so fanciful or illogical as these writers seem to suggest. Further, with Jyeshthā as the starting constellation of the war, the constellation of its last date (on which Balarama's pilgrimage also ended) can in no case be Shravana; whether the total war period is reckoned eighteen days as done by these writers or thirtyfive days as now established. Balarama, as we have seen, is however clearly mentioning Shravana. But unable to correctly reconcile such apparent inconsistencies several scholars have put the blame on the Mahabharata text itself. To cite here one typical example, this is what Dr. P. V. Kane remarks, "The above detailed statement about the astronomical passages of the Mahabharata will induce any unbiassed reader who has no axe to grind that they are hopelessly inconsistent and that no certain chronological conclusion can be drawn therefrom.... To me it appears probable that the final redactor of the Mahabharata had two or more sets of astronomical data about the war before him and without trying to examine and sift them he included them all in his work.... As I hold that either the Mahabharata passages on the positions of the planets were interpolated at a very late stage or are hopelessly inconsistent, I deem it unnecessary to enter upon an examination of the mathematical calculations made by several scholars to find out the date of the Bharata war from the shifting of the solstices and the position of the planets".¹⁹

Let us see the views of some others on this point. The leading Sanskrit commentator Nilakantha, notwithstanding the above quoted words of Lord Krishna, takes the bright thirteenth (or fourteenth) as the starting date of the war, with Mrigashirsha as its constellation²⁰. He

19. Op. Cit. p. 923. See also, "Some of the Maha Bharata references to astronomy afford an even better illustration of reckless astrological statements made without due regard to astronomical possibilities."—Swamikannu Pillai (quoted in Prof. Raghavan's book "The Date of the Maha Bharata War", p. 36).

20. To make confusion worse confounded, at one place in his commentary on the Bhishma Parva Nilakantha treats the abovesaid declaration of the war date as the utterance of Duryodhana instead of Krishna; and interprets *saṅgrāma* as the war preparations instead of the war itself. *yattu "saptamāccāpi divasādāmāvāsyā bhaviṣyati saṅgrāmaṁ yojayettatra tām hyāhuḥ śakradevatām"*

regards the day of the mace duel as the last of the continuous eighteen days of war, and since its *nakṣatra* is stated by Balarama to be Shravana, Nilakantha deduces the starting *nakṣatra* of the war by just counting eighteen positions backwards which takes him to Mrigashirsha. Others like Mr. C. V. Vaidya also follow Nilakantha on this point. But as is now clear the starting date of the war was *amāvāsyā*, and not the one assumed by these. And whatever that be, the further vital point is that the total war period covered thirtyfive days and not eighteen only. One has therefore to count back thirtyfive places from Shravana to arrive at the starting constellation of the war.

Besides the above writers, some others regard the opening constellation of the war as Bharani²¹, Rohini²², and Punarvasu or Pushya²³. But none of them has Indra as its deity; nor are they compatible with the constellations of Balarama's pilgrimage.

Which then is the precise *nakṣatra* of the starting date of war as intended by the poet? It is Chitrā. The subtle point here is that both

Continued from page 29]

prayādhvam vai kurukṣetram puṣyodyeti punaḥ punaḥ" *iti duryodhanavākyaṃ; tatra saṅgrāmaṃ tasya saṅgrāme jayasādhanaṃ dhārābandhādikaṃ tasyām yajayedityuktam.* Now, the words *prayādhvam* . . . *puṣyoda* are no doubt originally of Duryodhana and reported by Krishna to the Pandavas. But the verse *saptamāt* . . . *devatām* is a part of Lord Krishna's own talk with Karna containing a message for the Kaurava side. In Udyoga Parva where that verse actually occurs, even Nilakantha himself does not ascribe it to Duryodhana.

21. See "Mahabharata Yuddha Kala Nirnaya" p. 8; and "Bharatiya Kala Ganana", p. 126; both in Hindi by Jyotirvid Pandit D. Khedwal of Rajasthan. Originally this constellation is mentioned in "Bharata Savitri" (see above footnote 11); but it clearly goes against the clues and indications in the Mahabharata text itself.
22. Vide Mr. K. V. Abhyankar's article referred above. According to him the war started on the bright thirteenth (of Margashirsha) and proceeded from day to day. Here are the dates finalised by Mr. Abhyankar: "The war commenced not on Bharani the bright 11th, but on Rohini, the bright 13th Bhishma retired on Hasta, the dark 6th; Abhimanyu was slain on Visakha, the dark 9th; Jayadratha was slain on Anuradha, the dark 10th; the night fight took place on the night of the dark 10th; next day, on Jyestha the dark 11th, Drona was slain; on Purvasadha the dark 13th, Karna was slain; and on Uttarashadha the 14th, Shalya was slain during daytime." On the evening of the same day (of Shalya's death), the writer adds, there took place the mace duel between Bhima and Duryodhana.
23. See "Bharatiya Yuddhakala Nirnaya" (Marathi), by prof. R. V. Vaidya, 1964. According to him the total war period was sixteen days only. He also adds that the time of Bhishma's death can in no case fall in the bright fortnight.

Jyeshthā and Chitrā have the same deity Indra!²⁴ Chitrā is six places ahead of Pushya; and therefore by computing the *vrddhi* i. e. repetition of but one constellation, which is quite natural within that one week, we reach exactly the Chitrā constellation. On this very basis (vide the table of dates below), Shravana is also duly located on the concluding day of Balarama's pilgrimage. Besides this, the accurate description of the positions of the other planets like the Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn etc.²⁵ on the eve of the war, as given by the poet, can also now be reduced to consistency by assuming the moon in Chitrā at that time; though I am afraid I can not clarify all that in details in this article.

The Real Date of Bhishma's Death

Here is also the plain solution of the great riddle of the date of Bhishma's death. On the basis that the war started on the said *amāvāsyā*, Bhishma fell on the tenth day of actual fighting, at about evening, on the third (*trītiyā*) of the next dark fortnight. Right from then started his horrible lying on the bed of arrows (*śaraśāyā*). Let us start from the night of that dark third and count full fiftyeight nights as follows:—

- 13 remaining nights of that dark fortnight.
- 15 nights of next bright fortnight (Pausa month).
- 15 nights of the next dark fortnight.
- 15 nights of the next bright fortnight (of Magha month).

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24. "Taittiriya Samhita", 4-4-10; "Taittiriya Brahman", 1-5-1. For ready reference here is the complete list of constellations. 1 *āśvinī*; 2 *bharāṇī*; 3 *kṛttikā*; 4 *rohiṇī*; 5 *mṛga* (*mṛgaśirṣa*); 6 *ārdṛā*; 7 *punarvasu*; 8 *puṣya* (*tiṣya*); 9 *āśleṣā*; 10 *maghā*; 11 *pūrvāphalgunī*; 12 *uttarāphalgunī*; 13 *hastā*; 14 *citrā*; 15 *svātī*; 16 *viśākhā*; 17 *anurādhā*; 18 *jyeshthā*; 19 *mūlā*; 20 *pūrvāśādhā*; 21 *uttarāśādhā*; 22 *śravaṇa*; 23 *dhaniṣṭhā*; 24 *śatātārakā*; 25 *pūrvābhādrapadā* (*pūrvāprosthāpadā*); 26 *uttarābhādrapadā* (*uttarāprosthāpadā*); and 27 *revatī*. Sometimes one more constellation *abhiḥit* is added before *śravaṇa*; but the usual number is twenty-seven. On the average the moon crosses one constellation per day; though occasionally staying for two sunrises in the same constellation (resulting in the repetition of that constellation in the daily calendar), while sometimes crossing two constellations within two sunrises (resulting in the drop of one constellation). Thus in one month the moon completes one full round and also crosses two to three more constellations. The months are named after the constellation of the moon on the *pūrṇimā* (full moon day). Thus the month in which on the *pūrṇimā* the moon remains in (or near) *āśvinī* is called Āśvin. On the *pūrṇimā* of the next month the moon will be about 2½ constellations ahead i. e. in or near *kṛttikā*; hence that month is known as Kārtika; the month after it is Mārgashirsha, and so on.
25. Only the precise position of the Venus yet remains to be fully explained.

(Actually there was a drop of one *tithi* in the first fortnight, reducing its nights to twelve; and a compensating increase of one *tithi* in the next bright fortnight, raising its nights to sixteen; see the clarification in the table of dates below. But that of course leaves the total of fiftyeight unaffected). Now this takes us straight to the closing hours of the night of the *pūrṇimā* of the bright fortnight of Magha. It was just at this time of dawn preceding the next day that the great Bhishma breathed his last. The month was Magha, and the fortnight bright, exactly as stated in the Mahabharata text. However there still remains the curious expression *tribhāgaśeṣaḥ*. What exactly did the poet mean by it? The most interesting point is that he only meant by it that at the moment Bhishma spoke those words the bright fortnight (i. e. its last night, which was the night of that *pūrṇimā*) had only three *muhūrtas* left ! The word *bhāga* here only means a *muhūrta*, which is one-thirtieth part of a full day, amounting to 48 minutes. The expression *tribhāgaśeṣaḥ* does not therefore here mean that an arithmetical three-fourth part of that fortnight (amounting to about eleven days) or even of that month (amounting to about three weeks) was yet to pass. One is struck with wonder to see how by one ambiguous expression *tribhāgaśeṣaḥ* (like *aparāṇhe* discussed above) the master of riddles could create a confusion that lasted for centuries²⁶ !

Here is one more subtlety in which I feel the reader will be specially interested. It may be urged that since the fiftyeighth night was the night of the *pūrṇimā* itself, the moment it ended the bright fortnight also ended; and that therefore either the fiftyeighth night was not fully over if Bhishma breathed his last in the bright fortnight, or his death must be deemed to have occurred in the dark fortnight. A clarification of this point will throw further light on the wonderful precision of the master poet in his mathematical and astronomical references. In the present context the poet has used for the nights the word *rātryaḥ*, of

26. It is very interesting to note that the poet has used *bhāga* in the sense of a *muhūrta* in the Mahabharata elsewhere also; See Drona Parva, 186.1, 191.9. It should now be clear that the following verse found in some editions of the Mahabharata is obviously an interpolation. *śuklapakṣasya cāṣṭamyām māghamāsasya pāṛthivya, prajāpatye ca nakṣatre madhyam prāpte divākare.* (Shanti Parva, chapter 87). This names the bright eighth of the month of Magha as the date of Bhishma's death; and was probably introduced by some one labouring under the misunderstanding about *tribhāgaśeṣaḥ*. Besides, this verse has to relate that expression to the month (which moreover has to be taken as *amāvāsya*-ending); and not to the fortnight which was in no sense *tribhāgaśeṣaḥ* on that date. All the subtle clues and chronological references in the Mahabharata on this point, explained in this article, run counter to this verse. The reader will see that the verse can be easily deleted without impairing the flow of narration preceding and following it.

which *rātri* is the singular. Now in Sanskrit there are several words to denote the night-time, *rātri*, *rajanī*, *niśā*, *śarvarī* etc. Of these, according to strict Sanskrit terminology, while *niśā* covers the entire period from sunset to sunrise, the *rātri* (or *rajanī*) excludes both the dusk and dawn. The poet is thus quite correct in saying that the fiftyeighth *rātri* had ended and yet the death of Bhishma occurred in the bright fortnight, since it happened at the time of the dawn preceding the first sunrise of the dark fortnight. It may be added that elsewhere also in the Mahabharata the poet has used *rātri* in this precise sense, using on the other hand the word *niśā* when he wanted to refer to the moments immediately following the sunset. The reader no doubt knows that the Gita also uses the very word *rātri* in describing the superior and inferior timings for one's death (vide canto VIII verses 24-25). And further in the light of this exact meaning of *rātri*, it will also be now clear why in the utterance of Bhishma at the time of his death the poet has used with reference to the bright fortnight such an indirect expression as *bhavitum arhati* (i. e. "deserves to be called") instead of the plain word *bhavati* or *asti* (i. e. "is"). The sense of that significant expression is that though at that time the 'night' (*rātri*) of the *pūrṇimā* had ended, it "deserved to be known as" the bright fortnight, since the dark one had not then actually started. It is by relying in a wrong manner on these words *bhavitum arhati* that several scholars have tried to locate the death of Bhishma actually in the dark fortnight along with the insistence that the same may be regarded as the bright one.

Is the Idea of blank Days interpolated ?

The great significance of the blank war days in ascertaining the correct chronology of the Mahabharata war will now be clear to the reader. In this connection let me here refer to an article²⁷ to which my attention was invited at the time of my lectures on this subject at Nagpur. Its writer Mr R. L. Gokhale says that there was a custom of blank days in war in ancient India (for which he cites no basis); and that the Kaurava-Pandava war, as a real historical event, must have been fought on alternate days till its XV day (on which Drona was killed). The writer however adds that since the custom was not known to some of the several original authors of the Mahabharata epic, the description and chronology of the war as given in its text is mostly on the basis of a continuous daily fight. Mr. Gokhale holds that the war started on the *amāvāsya*; the XIV consecutive day from it is the bright thirteenth on which the moon rises early. So the original text of the Mahabharata, says the writer, must have put the disputed moonrise of

27. "Maharashtra-Sahitya-Patrika", (Marathi), Vol. IX, Number 1.
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that day in the early night; but some one afterwards, who happened to know the said custom, clumsily altered it to *late* in the night, in order to locate its date in the latter part of the dark fortnight, so as to include the intervening blank days following that said custom. But barring this one alleged interpolation, the Mahabharata text, according to Mr. Gokhale, is by and large based on the idea of a continuous daily war. Hence he locates the date of Bhishma's fall on the tenth day on the same basis; and therefore fixes Bhishma's death also on the same traditional bright eighth of Magha. In the same light he interprets the other post-war events mentioned in the Mahabharata text, such as the collective cremation performed by the Pandavas. Further he finds no blank days intervening the last three days of the war (inspite of the above alleged custom). In short, it is only to somehow explain the said late moonrise on the XIV day that he is inclined to refer to the alleged custom of blank days; treating that too as but a solitary clumsy interpolation.

Now, as for the alleged ancient Indian custom of blank war days, I for one know nothing definite so far. Therefore with an open mind on the point, let me add here the following. Had there been really such a general custom in those days, would it have remained unknown to the author of the Mahabharata, rightly regarded as a veritable encyclopaedia of all the then available knowledge? Besides, would the Mahabharata composition have contained in that case such a *secret* use of the blank days in all its war time chronological calculations, as is now clear from a close analysis of its verses? And even so, would it have so long remained an insoluble riddle to the Indian scholars themselves? It is possible that the poet may perhaps have seen or heard some actual case of such rest during a fight²⁸. But the extremely well-planned, consistent and intriguing use of the war-time rest days that he has made in the composition of this entire epic (and then thrown a challenge to his readers to discover the secret) shows that the curious idea of blank rest days with mutual consent in the eighteen days long fighting must have mainly been the wonderful product of the master poet's own brain. It is not only the late moonrise of the XIV day, but all other events of that war the dates of which are secretly based on the idea of the blank days. The consistent use of this and the allied secrets in the chronological riddles of the Mahabharata (as also the presence of other riddles in it) indicates that the vast epic is in the main the composition of but one single master-mind—whoever he may really be—and not of two or three persons as commonly supposed.

Whether the great Kaurava-Pandava war was a real historical event,

28. Even these days in the Viet Nam war a temporary truce has at times been observed by mutual agreement on some special religious occasions.

and if so, whether its chronological details have been faithfully reproduced in the Mahabharata epic, or altered by the poet intentionally or through ignorance, any definite view on this can be expressed only if and when adequate reliable data will be available on this matter apart from the Mahabharata itself. In the meanwhile it will be no doubt desirable to find out whether there is any direct or indirect reference to such rest days in any other ancient work in India or elsewhere; which should throw further light on the Mahabharata and its great author.²⁹

Some subtle Clues

By duly considering the blank days concealed in the Mahabharata's description of the war, one can thus reconcile fully the various dates and numbers of days so accurately mentioned by its author. But apart from this, there are also other subtle proofs, indirect as also direct, of these blank days in the Mahabharata verses. It is also possible to ascertain the precise special events that happened on several of these days of rest. Some of the proofs for these blank days available in the Mahabharata verses are placed here before the reader.

Let the reader have before his mind for this purpose three main calculations of the war dates. (1) The one proposed here, according to which the war started on the said *amāvāsyā* but continued on alternate days till the last eighteenth day, with one exception pointed out above. (2) The view that the war started on the same *amāvāsyā*, but was fought continuously day after day; as advocated by Dr. Kane, Dr. Daftari and others. (3) That the war started on the bright eleventh (or, thirteenth according to some like Nilakantha) of Margashirsha, and was fought continuously; it is on this last view that the Gita-jayanti is traditionally celebrated. On these three views the different days of actual fighting will fall on the dates given below.

29. Thus while no doubt somehow referring to the blank war days, the idea found such an incomplete and confused expression in Mr. Gokhale's article; and what is more, was suggested as a casual interpolation in opposition to the original Mahabharata text itself. It was therefore easy for Dr. K. L. Daftari to immediately refute it in his succeeding article in the same journal, and to insist that the Mahabharata war was fought continuously from day to day. And there the matter seems to have rested; since no subsequent writers (including the editors of the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute) seem to have taken any notice of or entertained in any form the fact that the entire voluminous war account in the text of the Mahabharata epic is quite from its original composition based very cleverly and systematically on the secret idea of the fighting on alternate days.

DAY OF FIGHT	VIEW (1)	VIEW (2)	VIEW (3)
I	<i>amāvāsyā</i>	<i>amāvāsyā</i>	Bright eleventh.
II	Bright second	Bright first	" twelfth.
III	" fourth	" second	" thirteenth.
IV	" sixth	" third	" fourteenth.
V	" eighth	" fourth	" <i>pūrṇimā</i>
VI	" tenth	" fifth	Dark first.
VII	" twelfth	" sixth	" second.
VIII	" fourteenth	" seventh	" third.
IX	Dark first	" eighth	" fourth.
X (Bhishma's fall)	" third	" ninth	" fifth.
XI	" fifth	" tenth	" sixth.
XII	" seventh	" eleventh	" seventh.
XIII	" tenth ³⁰	" twelfth	" eighth.
XIV (Death of Jayadratha)	" twelfth	" thirteenth	" ninth.
XV (Death of Drona)	" thirteenth	" fourteenth	" tenth.
XVI	<i>amāvāsyā</i>	<i>pūrṇimā</i>	" eleventh.
XVII	Bright second	Dark first	" twelfth.
XVII½ (Death of shalya)	" fourth	" second	" thirteenth.
XVIII (Mace duel)	" fifth		

Now the very significant point here is that while giving the detailed description of each day of fighting, the Mahabharata mentions on some specific dates complete darkness immediately on sunset. It is a clear indication of the dark fortnight. Besides, it also states that on certain dates the fighting stopped with the sunset, while on others it continued even after it. On one of the latter days (which was the XIV day of fight) there is a clear mention of darkness but also of a fight therein with the help of torches. Where, therefore, the fighting is said to have continued after sunset, but without a mention of darkness, we get a clue of the existence of moonlight. If with all this in mind we carefully examine the three calculations of the war dates, only the view proposed by us will be found to agree with all these subtle clues. Each of the other two views may agree with some clues but is falsified by the rest. This is briefly clarified below.

According to the Mahabharata text on the first day of the war the fighting stopped exactly on sunset. Describing it the poet says—

*tataḥ sainyaṣu bhagneṣu
mathiteṣu ca sarvaśaḥ*

30. For a drop of one *tithi* here, see the clarification below.

*prāpte cāstam dinakare
na prājñāyata kiñcana.*

—Bhishma Parva, 49/52

" Then with the armies thoroughly battered and broken up, and the sun having set, none could cognise anything. "

As said here, with the sunset on that day it became so pitch dark that none could see anything. Does not this clear indication prove that date to be *amāvāsyā*, and totally cancel the view of the bright eleventh (*ekādaśī*) ? Proceeding further, we are told that on the II, III, IV as also the V day the fighting again stopped at sunset ; but there is no indication of darkness. It means that there was moonlight, and yet so faint that it was not thought advisable to continue the fight after sunset. The dates of the 1st view (and also of the 2nd) are compatible with this, but not of the 3rd. On the VI day also there is no indication of darkness after sunset, but we find the first mention that the fighting continued for some time.

*anyonyāgaskṛtām rājan
yamarāṣṭravivardhanam
muhūrtāstamite sūrye*

cakruryuddham sudāruṇam. —Bhishma Parva, 79/60

" The warriors on both sides fiercely attacking each other, the fight enriched the domain of the God of Death. They thus continued the deadly battle for some time (literally, a *muhūrta*) after the sunset. " This also supports the bright tenth of the 1st view, disproving the dark first of the third view.

Let us come to the VII day. The fighting continued on that day too for some time after sunset; but there is again no mention of darkness. This also corroborates the bright twelfth of the 1st view, disproving the dark second of the 3rd view.

On the IX day there had arrived the dark first according to the first view, while it was the bright eighth on the 2nd view. In the description of this day it has been twice stated that after the sunset the scene appeared specially terrifying (*ghorā*).

*yudhyatāmeva teṣām tu
bhāskare'stamupāgate
sandhyā samabhavat ghorā
nāpaśyāma tato raṇam.*

—Bhishma Parva, 107/1

*tasminrātrimukhe ghore
pāṇḍavā vṛṣṇibhiḥ saha
srñjayāśca durādharṣā,
mantrāya samupāviśan.*

—107/10

"While they were thus fighting, the sun set, the evening began to appear terrible and we could not clearly perceive the battlefield—1. At that time of the commencement of the *rātri* (i. e. that part of the night which starts a little later than the actual sunset), which was appearing terrible, the Pandavas and the brave Srinjayas sat together for secret consultations along with the Vrishnis." It was the opening day (*pratipadā*) of the dark fortnight, and it is clear that the twilight period after sunset appeared all the more terrible on that battlefield in the absence of the moonlight. It may be noted that the expression *ghorā* is not found in the Mahabharata in the description of an evening of the bright fortnight. The above account disproves the date of bright eighth on that day.

Similarly on the XI day of fighting we are told that the entire scene was wrapped in total darkness at the sunset.

*sūrye cāstamanuprāpte
tamasā cābhisamvṛte
nājnāyata tadā śatrur-*

na suhṛinna ca kaścana. —Drona Parva, 16/49

"The sun having set, and with darkness spread all around, neither could one discern the enemy nor a friend". According to our calculation of dates, it was the dark fifth which quite fits with this description. It could certainly not be the bright tenth as proposed in the 2nd view.

Consider further the XIV day of fight, the night of which has already been a subject of much discussion above. The Mahabharata repeatedly says that on this date there was darkness as soon as the sun set; though even then a horrible nocturnal war was continued with the help of burning torches. The Pandava side was then full of joy and zest due to the fulfilment of Arjuna's most risky vow about killing Jayadratha before the sunset; while for the same reason the Kaurava side was full of sadness and yet motivated by a desire to avenge. The entire description of that night supports our view of the dates completely disproving the 2nd view. However is it also compatible with the dark ninth of the 3rd view? The two may agree so far as the first part of the night is concerned. But as the reader will no doubt remember, the moon arose towards the close of that night about three *bhāgas* (i. e. *muhūrtas*) prior to the next sunrise (vide Drona Parva, 186/1). Now on the dark ninth the moon rises somewhat earlier than this; but on the dark twelfth just at about that time³¹.

31. It is probably for this reason that under the third view some take the bright thirteenth as the starting date of the war instead of the eleventh; so that the XIV day of fight may be located on the dark eleventh. But though this may reconcile the night of the XIV day of fight, it remains inconsistent with the description of the evening on the I, VI and VII days of fighting.

Extreme Subtlety

In this manner these significant clues about the sunset scenes on the different days of fighting are of special importance for ascertaining their exact dates; and the descriptions of the days not clearly referred above will also be found to support completely the 1st table of dates given on the basis of this thesis. Critical readers might have however specially noted in this connection that I have not mentioned in the above discussion the VIII day of fight; and they might have even a doubt in their minds whether the description of the close of that day as given in the Mahabharata conflicts with my calculation of dates. Let me clear the point. The fact is that in describing the happenings of that day the poet has once more reached the height of verbal subtlety, of which therefore I desire to add a separate clarification.

While referring to the adjournment of fighting on that day, Sanjaya tells Dhritarashtra —

*parasparām samāsādyā
tava teṣām ca saṁyuge
teṣu śrānteṣu bhagneṣu
mṛditeṣu ca bhārata.*

—Bhishma Parva, 96/78

*rātriḥ samabhavat tatra
nāpaśyāma tato'nugān
tato'vahāraṁ sainyānām
pracakruḥ kurupāṇḍavāḥ.* —79

*rajanīmukhe suraudre tu
vartamāne mahābhaye
avahāraṁ tataḥ kṛtvā
sahīḥ kurupāṇḍavāḥ
nyaviśanta yathākālām
gatvā svasibiraṁ tadā.* —80

"At that moment both the Kaurava and Pandava armies fiercely attacked each other, the warriors on both sides in the end getting extremely exhausted, several of them fleeing the field while many others being killed — 78. In this situation there approached the night (*rātri*), and we could not distinctly see our attendants. The Kauravas as well as the Pandavas then ordered back their respective armies — 79. Thereafter at that commencement period of the night (*rajanī*), appearing specially fearful and horrible, the Kauravas and the Pandavas retired from the field, and reaching the camps began to rest for the due time — 80." The problem now is that as said herein Sanjaya and the other warriors could not at that time distinctly see their attendants, i. e. those who used to follow behind the fighters with extra stocks of arrows and other weapons.

Does this then mean that complete darkness had at that time prevailed over the entire scene? But according to the first table of dates it was the bright fourteenth on that night. How to account for this conflict?

Let me here mention one special point at the outset. In place of the words *nāpaśyāma tato'nugān* in the verse 96/79, some Mahābhārata versions carry the alternative reading *nāpaśyāma tato raṇam* ("we could not distinctly see the battlefield"); and the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute of Poona has accepted the latter as the authoritative one. Its plain meaning, however, is that at that moment the entire field of battle had become invisible (so great was the darkness all around); which clearly contradicts the bright fourteenth of the 1st table of dates as also the bright seventh of the 2nd table. Let us therefore minutely consider the reading *nāpaśyāma tato'nugān*.

The first fact to be taken into account in this connection is that on this VIII day of fight, as on the VI and VII, the battle continued for some time even after sunset. The mention of the sunset on this day occurs at the following place.

*evam tava balam sarvaṁ
hedimbena durātmanā
sūryāstamanavelāyām*

prabhagnaṁ vidrutam diśaḥ. —Bhishma Parva, 94/50

This means that by the time the sun set the Kaurava army had been terribly harassed by the ferocious Ghatotkacha. After this Duryodhana approached Bhishma, his commander-in-chief. The latter pacified him, and ordered Bhagadatta to confront Ghatotkacha. Thereupon fierce fighting again broke out (vide canto 95). Obviously, therefore, this happened after sunset; though to create the appearance of a riddle and confuse the readers the author of the Mahābhārata has also interspersed one incident of Bhishma's fighting just in between the description of this post-sunset fighting (96/15). But whatever that be, there is no doubt that as said above the confrontation between Bhagadatta and Ghatotkacha took place after the sunset. Ghatotkacha being a *niśācara* (i. e. of a demoniacal race which is active mostly in the night time), he used to develop special strength at that particular time. But apart from that we find some other clues also for it. Thus the trident (*triśūla*) hurled by Ghatotkacha at Bhagadatta, we are told, appeared surrounded by sparks on all sides (*visfulliṅgamālābhiḥ samantāt pariveṣṭitaḥ*, 95/60). Such sparks can be visible only after sunset. Further, it is also said that while the fight between Bhagadatta and Ghatotkacha was going on there approached the *rātri* i. e. night. This too shows that the fight continued after sunset. As explained above while discussing the date of Bhishma's death, the *rātri* (or *rajanī*), according to technical Sanskrit

terminology, is somewhat shorter than the *niśā*; as the former does not include the twilight periods at both ends. The usual English equivalent for all such words is however the same viz 'night'. As soon as the sun sets there starts the *niśā*; but the *rātri* commences some moments later. Wherever there is a reference to the moments immediately following the sunset, the master poet uses the word *niśā* or merely *sandhyākāla* (the time of evening twilight), but not *rātri*. See for example the description of the close of the II day of fight (Bhishma Parva, 55/43), of the III day (59/133), of the IV day (64/81, 86), of the V (74/37), of the VII (86/52), of the XIII (Drona Parva, 50/3, 72/1), and of the XV (Karna Parva, 10/5).

The next significant fact is that though the Ghatotkacha-Bhagadatta fight thus took place after the sunset, nevertheless its description does not contain any mention of darkness. Obviously therefore an inference of moonlight has to be drawn here also as on the two previous days. Whenever darkness existed the master poet, as already seen by us, makes a mention of it.

But then, if the fighting continued after sunset and besides there was also the moonlight, how has the poet said that after some time Sanjaya and his fellow-warriors could not see distinctly their attendants? Here is the subtle meaning of Vyasa. As the reader has been already told previously, Sanjaya himself, though the war reporter for Dhritarashtra, actually fought in that war on the Kaurava side. He was not a mere a story-teller or a reporter. And Sanjaya here says 'we i. e. the Kaurava warriors could not distinctly see our attendants at that time.' Now, the author of the Mahābhārata has also meticulously recorded that in that war the Kaurava army had occupied the western half of the battlefield of Kurukshetra :

*te sametya yathānyāyam
dhārtarāṣṭrā mahābalāḥ
kurukṣetrasya paścārdhe
vyavātisthanta danśitāḥ.* —Udyoga Parva, 195/11

"Having reached there, the Kauravas, fully armed, duly occupied the western half of the field of Kurukshetra." This means that the Kaurava army used to face the east while fighting. Taking all this into consideration, the above remarks of Sanjaya will now be seen to yield the following import: 'At that time of the commencement of the *rātri* (on the night of the bright fourteenth) the clear light of the moon was falling on us from the front, and therefore our own shadow was cast behind us on our attendants, making them indistinct for us'. And the shadow, be it noted, was not of a solitary man or two, but of the entire vast army including innumerable elephants, chariots and the like.

On the contrary, whenever the Mahabharata wants to express the idea of pure darkness devoid of moonlight, it has said not once or twice but at several places that none could see anywhere anything at that moment on this side or that. The reader may peruse again in this connection the description of the sunset scenes, quoted above, pertaining to the first day of fight (which was the *amāvāsya*), of the IX (which was the dark first), and of the XI day (dark fifth). Besides, see also the description of the early night on the XIV day (dark twelfth):

*tamasā cāvṛte loke
na prajñāyata kiñcana.* —Drona Parva, 154/22

"The entire scene being enveloped in darkness, nothing could be cognised." So too on the XVI day of fighting (*amāvāsya*), as soon as the sun set—

*girimastam samāsādya
pratyapadyata bhānuman.* —Karna Parva, 30/37
*tamasā ca mahārāja
rajasā ca viśeṣataḥ
na kiñcit pratyapaśyāma
śubham vā yadi vāśubham.* —38

"At that moment the sun set; and due to darkness and also particularly the dust we could see nothing good or bad".

Well, here is one more fine clarification. If the only difficulty, then, was of the shadow cast behind the Kaurava warriors due to the clear moonlight striking from the front, should it not have been present (on that night of the bright fourteenth) right from the time of the sunset? How has the fighting then been shown to have continued for some time more till the commencement of the *rātri*? The answer. The reddish twilight of the setting sun continued from the western horizon (i. e. from behind the Kaurava army) in the early pre-*rātri* moments of the *niśā*; but by the time the *rātri* commenced that too ceased, and on the other hand the almost full disc of the moon ascended further in the east, as a result of which its rays striking from the front all the more deepened the shadow on the west.

Thus the subtle description *nāpaśyāma tato'nugān* only indicates the backward shadow of the Kaurava army, and is therefore quite consistent with the bright fourteenth on the VIII day. And unless the overall chronological secrets of the Mahabharata war now brought into light in this research, as well as the entire calculations of dates based thereon from Krishna's declaration of the war date till the death of Bhishma are all incorrect and wrong, it is very unlikely for *nāpaśyāma tato ranam* to be the original Mahabharata reading in the description of the close of

the VIII day of fighting. And on the contrary, *nāpaśyāma tato'nugān* can in all reasonable probability be the original version. The only point is that not knowing its hidden import, some one must have later interpolated therein *ranam* (battle-field) in place of *anugān* (attendants); the very likely reason for which is of course that in the account of the IX day the poet himself has put in Sanjaya's mouth the words *nāpaśyāma tato ranam* with reference to the post-sunset moments. But there at that place they are quite appropriate too; since according to the dates now calculated by us it was the dark first on that day. But the date on the VIII day was of a quite different kind. And apart from all this, had the same also been the original Mahabharata reading for the VIII day, there seems no reason why some one else should have substituted in its place the version *nāpaśyāma tato'nugān*, which though in reality of an extremely subtle import is apparently a meaningless one.

However, if it is still desired to insist on the reading *nāpaśyāma tato ranam* in the description of the close of the VIII day, *ranam* may here mean not the battlefield but the battle itself. The expression as a whole would then mean 'we (indicating not necessarily the Kaurava side only but both the sides) did not thereafter encounter any fighting, i. e. the fighting stopped'. For the IX day also the poet has used the same expression; but there it is clearly said (vide Bhishma Parva 107/1, quoted above) that as soon as the sun set the *sandhyā* i. e. dusk (which starts immediately after sunset) became specially terrible (*ghorā*), and with it the fighting stopped. On the other hand, on the VIII day the fighting continued even after sunset during the dusk, but when the *rātri* (which commences after the dusk) approached, the fighting stopped. This fits in with our dates of the first view, since on the VIII day it was the bright fourteenth, and so fighting could continue even after sunset; whereas on the IX day it was the dark first, and so the fight stopped just at sunset.

The Rules of War

So far as I can say no attention has so long been paid in the study of the Mahābhārata to these subtle clues regarding the presence or absence of moonlight after sunset on different days. They however afford very important corroboration of precise dates of the days of fighting and thereby also provide strong indirect proof of the intervening blank days. What is further very surprising, not only was the significance of these mentions of the post-sunset fighting disregarded from the point of view of the precise dates; but they were indeed so thoroughly overlooked that a very widespread notion has become prevalent that the fighting in the Mahābhārata war used to stop every day exactly at sun-

set (and both sides, behaving friendly with each other during the night, again resumed the fighting with the next sunrise). This idea has no basis in the Mahābhārata text. Neither did it necessarily happen on each day; nor had the two sides arrived at any such common understanding. The fact is that while stating the rules of war mutually agreed upon by both sides, the poet has used a clever phraseology. Here is the relevant portion of the poet's statement of those rules.

*tataste samayaṁ chakruḥ
kurupāṇḍavasomakāḥ.* —Bhisma Parva, 26

*dharmān saṁsthāpayāmāsur-
yuddhānām bharataṣabha
nirṛte vihite yuddhe
syāt prītirnaḥ parasparam* —27

*yathāparam yathāyogaṁ
na ca syāt kasyacit punaḥ
vācā yuddhapravṛttānām
vācāiva pratiyodhanam
niṣkrāntāḥ prānāmadhyāt
na hantavyāḥ kadācana.* —28

*rathī ca rathinā yodhyo
gajena gajadhūrgataḥ
aśvenāsvi padātīśca
pādātenaiva bhārata.* —29

"Thereafter the Kauravas, Pandavas and the Somakas formulated by common agreement the following rules to regulate the fighting in the war. During the periods of retirement from actual fighting in between the war they were all to behave friendly towards each other (and not to launch surprise attacks); during such periods (of rest) none was to behave in an enemical manner with any one else. In the war, words were to be met with words only; and none fleeing from the field of battle was to be slain. The warrior using a chariot was to be met only by another using a chariot; one riding an elephant was to be confronted only by another riding an elephant; similarly the cavalry was to be met only by cavalry, and infantry by infantry". It has to be clearly noted that the Mahābhārata text only says *nirṛte vihite yuddhe* ('during the periods of retirement from actual fighting in between the war'). And yet its readers, translators and commentators have been unwarrantedly adding therein some such words as 'after sunset' or during the night³².

32. For but two glaring instances of this, see the widely circulated "Mahābhārata" (English Edition) by C. Rajagopalachari, p. 205; and the popular Gita Press Hindi Translation of the verse under consideration.

The readers of this thesis will however no doubt now realise that the master poet has cleverly covered by his words even the intervening blank days, and at the same time has nowhere said that the temporary retirement periods were to commence exactly at sunset and end precisely at the immediately following sunrise.

Clear Proof of the thirteenth blank Day

It is very interesting to see how skilfully the master poet has concealed the blank days of the war, at the same time leaving fine positive clues for their discovery. For the sake of illustration, here is the direct proof of the blank day following the thirteenth day of fighting.

On the thirteenth day Abhimanyu, the brave youthful son of Arjuna, was killed in a concerted attack by Jayadratha, Drona and others, while he was unsuccessfully trying to extricate himself out of the very complex *cakravyūha* formation of the Kaurava army. That day the fighting stopped with sunset. On return to the camp from the battlefield Arjuna got the very sad news of Abhimanyu's death. In a revengeful mood he immediately announced his vow to kill Jayadratha on the next day of fighting before sunset, or immolate himself in fire. Getting quick news of it through the spies Jayadratha approached Duryodhana and obtained a definite assurance of complete protection at any cost. Both of them then went to Drona for the same purpose. By *that night* the night had already started.

*evamāśvāsito rājan
putreṇa tava saindhavaḥ
duryodhanena sahito*

dronam rātrāvupāgamat. —Drona parva, 74/21

"Saindhav (Jayadratha), thus assured by your son (Duryodhana) went along with the latter to Drona during the night time." Krishna on his part immediately got information of all this through his secret service; and warned Arjuna of the very grave risk (of self-immolation) incurred by him in undue haste. In reply Arjuna assured Krishna about killing Jayadratha according to the vow with utmost bravery. Nevertheless worried by that vow both Krishna and Arjuna spent that night without sleep,

*tām niśāṁ dukkhaśokārtau
niśvasantāvivoragau
nidrām naivopalebhāte*

vāsudevadhanañjayau. —77/1

"Overcome with sorrow and grief, and exhaling long deep breaths like a hissing snake, Krishna and Arjuna had no sleep during that night." At the close of that night both of them appeared very agitated, with several

evil omens and portents occurring. The following description of it all is of great significance for our present purpose.

*naranārāyanau kruddhau
jñatvā devāḥ savāsavaḥ
vyathitāścintayāmāsuḥ
kiṁsvidetad bhaviṣyati. —77/2.*

*vauśca dāruṇā vātāḥ
ruksā ghorābhiśamsināḥ
sakabandhastathāditye
paridhiḥ samadrśyata. —3*

*śuṣkāśanyaśca niṣpetuḥ
sanirghātāḥ savidyutāḥ
cacāla cāpi pṛthivī
saśailavanakānanā. —4*

*cukṣubhuśca mahārājā
sāgarā makarālayāḥ
pratisrotāḥ pravṛttāśca
tathā gantuṁ samudragāḥ. —5*

*rathāśvanaranāgānām
pravṛttamadharaṭṭaram
kravyādānām pramodārtham
yamarāṣṭravivṛddhaye. —6*

*vāhanāni śakṛnmūtre
mumucū ruruduśca ha
tān dṛṣṭvā dāruṇān sarvān
utpātān lomaharṣaṇān —7*

*sarve te vyathitāḥ sainyās-
tradiyā bharatarṣabha
śrutvā mahābalasyogrām
pratiññān savyasācināḥ. —8*

“Learning that Nara (Arjuna) and Narayana (Krishna) had both become very agitated, the gods including Indra became very restless and worried as to what would all that lead to—2. There started blowing dry terrifying winds foreboding great evil; and the disc of the sun appeared with an ominous spot containing the figure of a headless trunk—3. Even in the absence of rains there started falling the *vajras* of the rain-god Indra, accompanied by thunderous sounds and lightning flashes; while the very earth began to shake along with mountains and forests—4. The oceans, abodes of the sea-animals, became very disturbed; and the rivers entering the seas started flowing in the reverse direction

towards their sources—5. The lips of the chariot-horses, men as also elephants began to flutter, indicating a specially happy time for the beasts of prey and for the domain of Yama, the god of death—6. Horses, elephants etc started discharging urine and stools, along with sad wailing cries. Seeing all those hair-raising horrible occurrences, and hearing about Arjuna's terrible vow, all the warriors in the Kaurava army were extremely upset—7, 8.”

At that moment Arjuna requested Krishna to see Abhimanyu's mother Subhadra and the widowed Uttara in order to console them. Accordingly Krishna went to the (residential) camp of Arjuna.

*tato'rjunagrhaṁ gatvā
vāsudevaḥ sudurmanāḥ
bhaginīm putrasokartām
āśvāsayata duḥkhitām. —77/11*

“Then Krishna, himself greatly depressed in mind, proceeded to Arjuna's camp and consoled his weeping sister Subhadra, grief-stricken due to the death of her son.” On this occasion Krishna assured her—

*prāpsyate cāpyasau pāpaḥ
saindhavo bālaghātakāḥ
asyāvālepasya phalaṁ
sasuhṛdgaṇabāndhavaḥ. —77/18*

*vyuṣṭāyām tu varārohe
rajanyām pāpakarmakṛt
na hi mokṣyati pārthāt saḥ
pravisto'pyamarāvatiṁ. —19*

*śvaḥ śiraḥ śroṣyase tasya
saindhavasya raṇe hṛtam
samantapañcakād bāhyam
viśokā bhava mā rudaḥ. —20*

“Subhadra, after the passing of the night this evil-minded Jayadratha, the slayer of just a boy (like Abhimanyu), shall reap the fruit of this deed along with his kith and kin. Even if he were to hide himself in Amaravati (the capital of God Indra) he will be unable to save himself from Arjuna—18, 19. Tomorrow you shall hear that Jayadratha's head has been cut off in the battle and flung away out of the Samantapanchaka area. Please give up your grief; do not weep—20.”

Now the very vital point for consideration here is, which precisely was the night mentioned by Krishna in this conversation, after the end of which Jayadratha was to be surely killed? As the reader will see from the above detailed account, one night had already elapsed since the death of Abhimanyu and Arjuna's vow. Clearly the night meant by

Krishna was of the *intervening blank day*, in the morning of which Krishna was holding that conversation with Subhadra. After consoling her and also Draupadi, Uttara etc., Krishna again returned to Arjuna; and from there he and the other fighters went to their respective camps.

*tato'bhyanuññaya nṛpān
kṛṣṇo bandhūnstathārjunam
viveśāntahpure rājan
te ca jagmuryathālayam. —78/44*

"Thereafter taking leave of the kings, relations and Arjuna himself, Krishna retired to his own personal apartment, while the others too proceeded to their own respective resting camps." This occurred on the morning of the next day immediately following that of Abhimanyu's death. Had that next day also been one of actual fighting, where would Krishna, Arjuna and the other warriors have gone at that time? To their respective camps for rest or straight to the battle-field? However, there is a further still clearer indication of this blank day.

After these happenings there intervened *one more night* during which Krishna got ready near Arjuna's bed all arrangement for the worship of God Shankara, and then asked Arjuna to go to bed with a peaceful mind. He himself too retired to his bed.

*supyatām pārtha bhadram te
kalyāṇāya vrajāmyaham
sthāpayitvā tato dvāsthān
goptr̥nscāttāyudhān narān. —79/6*

*dārukānugataḥ śrīmān
viveśa śibiraṁ svakam
śiśye ca śayane śubhre
bahukṛtyaṁ vicintayan. —7*

" 'God bless you, Arjuna, now you may go to sleep. I am going away for securing your good'. So saying, and appointing there armed guards and sentinels, Krishna went away to his own camp along with his charioteer Daruka; and while deliberating over several possible lines of action he himself lay down upon a pure white bed." In the earlier part of this (second) night Krishna had a good sleep; but woke up at midnight and strongly reminded of Arjuna's most risky vow held a long talk on the matter with Daruka.

*tasyām rajanyām madhye tu
pratibuddho janārdanaḥ. —79/20
smṛtvā pratiññam parthasya
dārukam pratyābhāṣata. —21*

"At the middle of that night Krishna woke up, and remembering the vow of Arjuna he said to Daruka ...". The expression *pratibuddhaḥ* in this verse indicates Krishna's state of clear sleep prior to this talk with Daruka during that night. Arjuna also had a good sleep that night, during which he experienced a sort of 'dream' wherein Krishna approached him.

*kuntīputrastu taṁ mantram
smaranneva dhanañjayah
pratiññāmātmano rakṣan
mumohācintyavikramaḥ. —80/1*

*taṁ tu śokena santaptaṁ
svapne kapivaradhvajam
āsasāda mahātejā
dhyāyantaṁ garudadhvajah. —2*

"Arjuna, anxious to duly fulfil his vow and reciting the *mantra* (obtained specially for invoking God Shankara) was overcome by deep sleep (or, a state of trance)—1. The worried Arjuna had at that time a 'dream' in which Krishna approached him—2". In that state of the 'dream', Krishna took Arjuna to Lord Shankara who bestowed upon him the great *pāśupata* weapon (vide chapters 80, 81). Extremely happy, Krishna and Arjuna immediately returned to the camp.

*anuññatau kṣaṇe tasmin
bhavenārjunakeśavau
sātyagād svaśibiraṁ vīrau
mudā paramayā yutau. —81/24*

"With the permission of God Shankara, the two warriors (Krishna and Arjuna) returned the very moment to their camp with extreme joy." However all this 'dream' seems to have been but a mystic experience of Arjuna created by Krishna; for the Mahabharata also says that during that entire night Krishna remained conversing with Daruka.

*tayoḥ samvadatorevaṁ
kṛṣṇadārukayostathā
sātyagād rajanī rājan
atha rājānvabudhyata. —82/1*

"While Krishna and Daruka were thus conversing, the night ended; and King Yudhishtira also awoke."

This shows that the second night in which Arjuna had a sleep and the mystic 'dream' (and Krishna too had a good sleep in the earlier part and then remained conversing with Daruka) was certainly *different* from the previous night in which both of them had absolutely no sleep. The said 'dream' in the second night has also been again mentioned

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at the end of the Drona Parva in the talk between Arjuna and Vyas (vide 202/145, 146).

After this there also followed the *second* sunrise and morn. The army was then getting ready for fighting; Krishna approached Yudhishtira (82/29-34) and assured that Arjuna would surely fulfil his vow. Just at the moment Arjuna also appeared there—

*tathā tu vadatām teṣāṃ
prādurāsīd dhanāñjayah
didṛkṣurbharataśreṣṭham
rājānaṃ sasuhṛdgaṇam. —84/1*

“ While they were thus conversing there came Arjuna himself to pay his respects to King Yudhishtira who was then surrounded by his kith and kin.” The significant point here again is that both Arjuna and Krishna were appearing very pleased in this *second* morning (far different from their restless and worried mood on the previous morning). The master poet has specially stressed this. Seeing Arjuna’s happy mood Yudhishtira said—

*vyaktamarjuna saṅgrāme
dhruwaste vijayo mahān
yādrūpā ca te chāyā
prasannaśca janārdanaḥ. —84/4*

“ Arjuna, it is evident that you are sure to obtain a resounding victory in the fighting (today); your facial expression shows it, and similarly Krishna too is appearing very pleased.” Arjuna related to Yudhishtira his ‘ dream ’ of that night, hearing which all there were pleased. Taking leave of Yudhishtira all of them then proceeded straight to the battle field (and not to their resting camps as on the *previous* morning).

*anujñātāstataḥ sarve
suhṛdo dharmasūmunā
tvaramāṇāḥ susannaddhā
hrṣṭā yuddhāya niryayuh. —84/8*

“ Bidden by Yudhishtira all those kinsmen and friends, fully equipped and full of joy, thereafter forthwith proceeded for the war.”

On the occasion of this (second) morning there were good omens all around the Pandavas (quite contrary to the above quoted bad ones of the previous morning).

*sajayāśiḥ sapunyahāḥ
sūtamāgadhaniḥsvanāḥ
yukto vāditraghoṣeṇa
teṣāṃ ratikaro’bhavat. —84/23.*

*tamanuprayato vāyuh
puṇyagandhavahāḥ śubhah
vavau saṁharṣayan pāṛtham
dviṣataścāpi śoṣayan. —24*

*tatastasmīn kṣaṇe rājan
vividhāni śubhāni ca
pradurāsan nimittāni
vijayāya bahūni ca
pāṇḍavānām tvadīyānām
viparītāni māriṣa. —25*

*dr̥ṣṭvārjuno nimittāni
vijayāya pradakṣiṇam
yuyudhānaṃ mahesvāsam
idaṃ vacanamabravit. —26*

*yuyudhānādya yuddhe me
dr̥ṣyate vijayo dhruvāḥ
yathā hīmani līṅgāni
dr̥ṣyante śinipūṅgava. —27*

*so’ham tatra gamiṣyāmi
yatra saindhavako nṛpaḥ
vijyāsuryamalokāya
mama vīryam pratikṣate. —28*

“ The sonorous sounds of the courtiers and attendants, mingled with *jaya* (victory) expressions and auspicious *puṇyāhavācana* recitations, to the accompaniment of the sound of musical instruments, were all adding to their pleasant mood—23. As Arjuna proceeded, sweet-scented auspicious wind followed him, enhancing his joy while depressing the enemy—24. At that time numerous good omens and portents appeared, indicating victory for the Pandavas while foreboding the contrary for the Kauravas—25. Seeing those lucky portents of victory, Arjuna said to Satyaki (Yuyudhana), ‘ In view of these auspicious omens I feel certain of my victory in the war today. So I am now proceeding straight to where King Jayadratha, eager for departing to the other world, is awaiting my bravery ’—26,27, 28.”

In this manner between the evening of the day of Abhimanyu’s death, and the day of Jayadratha’s death, there intervened two different nights (and two dawns), as indicated in the Mahabharata itself, which clearly establishes the intervening blank day.

The last blank Day

Let us see how skilfully the master poet has similarly concealed the last blank day of the war.

On the XVII day of fighting Karna was killed. On that day the fighting then stopped in the evening. The brief account of that day, which appears in the beginning of Shalya Parva says —

pratyupāyāma sāyānhe

nirjitāḥ savyasācinā

hatapravīrā vidhvastā

nikṛtā niṣitaiḥ śaraiḥ. —Shalya Parva, 3/8

“Very badly wounded by pointed arrows and routed by Arjuna, and with several of our leading warriors slain, we (i. e. the Kaurava side) returned (to the camps) from the battlefield in the evening (after the death of Karna)”. On the other side, Krishna and Arjuna went to Yudhishtira, who was resting in his camp, to convey the happy news of Karna's death. At that approaching night, Yudhishtira again went to the battlefield with Arjuna and Krishna to see the dead Karna with his own eyes. In the light of lamps they saw there the corpse of Karna (Karna Parva, 96/38).

In the opposite camp, seeing the very bad plight of the Kaurava army, Kripacharya advised Duryodhana to end the war and seek peace (Shalya Parva, canto 4). But rejecting the suggestion, Duryodhana expressed his firm resolve to continue the fight. With that decision the chief Kaurava warriors went in the early night hours to deliberate and rest on the Himalayan mountains about sixteen miles from the battlefield.

evam duryodhanenoktam

sarve sampūjya tadvacaḥ

sādhu sākṣviti rājānaṁ

kṣatriyāḥ sambabhāṣire. —Shalya Parva, 5/48.

parājayamaśocantāḥ

kṛtācittāḥ vikrame

sarve suniṣcitā yoddhuṁ

udagramanaso'bhavan. —49

tato vāhān samāśvasya

sarve yuddhābhinandināḥ

ūne dviyojane gatvā

pratyaṭiṣṭhanta kauravāḥ. —50

ākāṣe vidrume punye

prasthe himavataḥ śubhe

arūṇām sarasvatīm prāpya

papuh sasnusca te jalām. —51

“On Duryodhana saying thus, all his warriors respected his words saying ‘very good, very good’—48. Casting off the gloom of their defeat, they all firmly resolved to fight with bravery; fully determined to continue the war, their hearts were filled with enthusiasm—49. Thereafter those Kaurava warriors, fired with enthusiasm for war, went to a distance of a little less than sixteen miles (*ūne dviyojane*), and letting their conveyances rest they camped there—50. Beneath the open sky they reached the barren holy plateau of the Himalayas; and proceeding to the banks of the Himalayan (or, slightly reddish) river Sarasvati, they took bath therein as also drank its water—51.”

Though eager to continue the war, the Kaurava warriors remained on the whole sad and depressed in their hearts during that night due to the loss of Karna. Away from the battlefield of Kurukshetra, they spent that night on the Himalayas.

atha haimavate prasthe

sthītvā yuddhābhinandināḥ

sarva eva mahāyodhās-

tatra tatra samāgatāḥ. —6/1

śalyaśca citrasenaśca

śakuniśca mahārathaḥ

aśvatthāmā kṛpaścaiva

kṛtavarmā ca sātavataḥ. —2

suseṇo'ristasenaśca

dhyatasenaśca vīryavān

jayatsenaśca rājānas-

te rātrimuṣitāstataḥ. —3

raṇe karṇe hate vīre

trāsītā jītakāśibhiḥ

nālabhañśarma te putrā

himavantamṛte girim. —4

“Full of readiness for war, all those great warriors camped on the Himalayan plateau and gathered together (for important deliberations)—1. Shalya, Chitrasena, the great warrior Shakuni, Ashvatthama, Kripacharya, Kritavarma of the Sattvata family, Sushena, Aristasena, the

brave Dhritasena, Jayatsena, along with other kings spent the night there—2, 3. Due to the death of the brave Karna in the war, as also harassment by the victorious Pandavas, your (i. e. Dhritarashtra's) sons (the Kaurava brothers) could find no peace of mind except on the Himalayan mountains—4." During the deliberations the meeting suggested to Duryodhana that in order to duly continue the war a proper Commander-in-Chief be first appointed in place of the dead Karna. Duryodhana sought the guidance of Ashvatthama, who proposed the name of Shalya for the high post. Duryodhana as also all others present readily agreed. Shalya too gave his consent, and with full self-confidence assured the total defeat of the enemy.

Thereafter Shalya was duly installed as the Commander-in-Chief.

evamuktastato rājā
madrādhipatimanjāsā —Shalya Parva, 7/6
abhyasīncata senāyā
madhye bharatasattama
vidhinā śāstradr̥ṣṭena
kliṣṭarūpo viśāmpate. —7
abhiṣikte tatastasmin
simhanādo mahānabhūt
tava sainye'bhyavādyanta
vāditrāṇi ca bhārata. —8

"Oh King Dhritarashtra, being thus addressed by Shalya (expressing his consent and assurance), the unhappy Duryodhana (depressed due to the repeated reverses in the war) thereafter performed the formal installation ceremony of Shalya, in the presence of the army, with all religious rites—6, 7. On the completion of the installation ceremony, the Kaurava army gave vent to thunderous shouts of joy and cheer to the accompaniment of musical instruments—8."

Now an important secret has been cleverly concealed at this stage. Though the decision to appoint Shalya as Commander-in-Chief was taken on the Himalayas (in the early night of the day of Karna's death), nevertheless the actual installation was performed after the close of that night on return from there to Kurukshetra, in the presence of the Kaurava army! It was hardly possible to move the entire vast army to such a distance just for a night. Only the leading warriors had gone to the Himalayas; while it is clearly stated in verses 7/7, 8 that the installation ceremony was performed in the presence of the army, which was advisable too from the military point of view.

Apart from this, the performance of that installation ceremony on the field of Kurukshetra after return from the Himalayas is also proved by one more subtle clue. The shouts of joy in the Kaurava army following that installation were heard personally by Yudhishtira in his own camp!

sainyasya tava taṁ śabdaṁ
śṛtvā rājā yudhishtiraḥ
vārṣṇeyamabravīd vākyam
sarvakṣatrasya paśyataḥ. —7/24
madrarājāḥ kṛtaḥ śalyo
dhārtarāṣṭreṇa mādhaba
senāpatirmaheśvāsah
sarvasainyeṣu pūjitaḥ. —25

"Hearing the loud shouts of joy in thine (Kaurava) army, Yudhishtira said to Krishna in the presence of all his warriors, 'Duryodhana has appointed as his C-in-C the great warrior Shalya respected by his entire army' ". Now, the Himalayan resting place was about sixteen miles away from Kurukshetra. Had the (installation and the following) shouts of joy taken place on the Himalayan plateau itself, Yudhishtira would have known about it through his spies and not his own ears. Thus by specially mentioning on the one hand the distance of sixteen miles, and on the other the fact of the joyous Kaurava shouts having been personally heard by Yudhishtira himself, the master poet has provided a subtle but sure clue of the performance of Shalya's installation after return to the Kurukshetra camps on the next day after Karna's death.

Nevertheless, to conceal this fact the poet has also employed here, as at several other places, the expression *tataḥ* in an ambiguous manner. After relating the resolve taken on the Himalayan heights to appoint Shalya as C-in-C, the great author of the Mahabharata adds that 'thereafter' Shalya was duly installed. But *tataḥ* ('thereafter') here does not mean 'immediately after it'. On the other hand, that expression skilfully covers in a concealed form the fact that in the meanwhile the leading Kaurava warriors, after spending that one night on the Himalayas, had on the next day returned to Kurukshetra.

Another very significant point in this connection is that subsequent to this installation (and prior to the next resumption of fighting) *one more night passed*, during which the Kaurava warriors (feeling quite assured by Shalya's installation as C-in-C) were in a highly pleasant mood, whereas on the *previous* night (on the Himalayan plateau) they were restless and dejected.

abhisikte tathā śalye
tava samyeṣu mānada
na karnavyasanam kīncin-
menire tatra bhārata. —7/21
hr̥ṣṭāḥ sumanasascaiva
babhūvustatra sainikāḥ
menire nihatānpārthān
madrarājavaśam gatān. —22
praharṣam prāpya senā tu
tāvakī bharatarṣabha
tām rātrimuṣitā suptā
harṣacittā ca sā bhavat. —23

“Revered King Dhritarashtra, Shalya having been thus installed in the presence of thine (Kaurava) army, its warriors felt no more any grief over the loss of Karna—21. Happy and full of joy, they now felt confident of the sure defeat and death of the Pandavas at the hands of Shalya—22. Thus filled with joy thine (Kaurava) army spent the night in sound sleep with great pleasure—23.”

This *second night* after Karna's death has been again mentioned a few verses later also.

vyatitāyām rajanyām tu
rājā duryodhanastadā
abravit tāvakān sarvān
sannahyantām mahārathāḥ. —8/1

“After the close of the night King Duryodhana gathered all thine (Kaurava) great warriors, and asked them to get fully equipped and ready for the fighting”. And immediately after this the fighting in fact started just at the dawn itself (even before actual sunrise) (vide 8/45). This was hardly possible had this night been the same during which the Kaurava warriors had slept sixteen miles away from the Kurukshetra battlefield on the Himalayan heights.

It was clearly on the blank day intervening between these *two separate nights* that Shalya was installed as the C-in-C in the Kaurava camps at Kurukshetra with full religious formalities. The detailed description of that ceremony has been given twice in the Mahabharata in connection with the installations of Drona and Karna; and has been already quoted above.

Finally here is one more definite clue of this blank day. As said above, on hearing the vociferous shouts of joy proceeding from the

Kaurava army when Shalya was installed, Yudhishtira immediately held consultations with Krishna. In reply the latter assured the ultimate victory of the Pandavas, and asked Yudhishtira himself to slay Shalya on the battle field. Giving this guidance Krishna returned in the evening to his own camp. See—

yacca te tapaso vīryam
yacca kṣātram balam tava
taddarśaya rane sarvam
jahi cainam mahāratham. —7/41
etāvaduktvā vacanam,
keśavaḥ paravīrahā
jagāma śībiraṁ sāyam
pūjyamāno'tha pāṇḍavaḥ. —42

“‘Oh King (Yudhishtira), employ on the battle field your entire spiritual power, physical bravery as well as fighting spirit, and slay the great warrior Shalya’—41. Giving this piece of advice Krishna, honoured by the Pandavas, returned to his own camp *sāyam* i. e. in the evening—42”. Is it not quite clear that this day (on the evening of which Krishna gave this advice to Yudhishtira for slaying the latest Kaurava C-in-C Shalya) was neither the day of Karna's death nor again the day of Shalya's death? on the day of Karna's death, a little after the evening Krishna, Arjuna and Yudhishtira had been again to the battle-field to actually see the dead Karna; and besides, by that evening there was no question of Shalya's installation as C-in-C. Further, as we have seen above, there is also a clear mention in the Mahabharata of the passing of one night between the death of Karna and the installation of Shalya. Then, on the other hand, Shalya having been killed just at about noon on the very first day of fighting after he became the C-in-C, there can be no question of the said advice (to slay Shalya) being given by Krishna on the evening of that day too. The conclusion is absolutely inevitable that this conversation between Krishna and Yudhishtira (and the immediately preceding installation of Shalya); had taken place on the *intervening blank day* itself! It is however truly a matter of great wonder as to how in the absence of any idea of this last blank day, the countless readers as also the scholars of the Mahabharata in and outside India must have interpreted for centuries the master poet's most significant expression *sāyam* (‘in the evening’) in the said verse 7/42? Is it for this that the epic of the Mahabharata is being again and again regarded as an inconsistent self-contradictory mixture of the compositions by different authors at different periods of time?

To conclude, by thus cleverly indicating two different nights and two different evenings intervening between the afternoon time (*aparāṇha*) of Karna's death and the mid-day time (*madhyāṇha*) of Shalya's death, the master poet has very cleverly suggested the last blank day in that long period of the war.

The Poet's Mastery in Riddles

It is by means of such subtle clues that the master poet has wonderfully indicated the blank days of war. However, these important clues also have not only not received due attention so far at the hands of the Mahabharata readers, but have even been often relegated to the lumber room of alleged interpolations, merely because they could not fit in with the traditional view of a continuous fight from day to day.

One may naturally wonder as to how the blank days could remain concealed if there are such clues for them in the Mahabharata verses themselves. For that the master poet relied upon his very skilful use of ambiguous phraseology. Thus he goes on repeating that the war was fought for eighteen days; however meaning inwardly that this relates only to the actual fighting time. Similarly he is often found to use the word *adya*, which apparently means 'now' or 'today', but in the subtle context of the Mahabharata text may also mean 'on the next resumption of the fighting.'

Let us take the illustration of Shalya's installation itself. His address to Duryodhana after the installation is put in the Mahabharata in the following words.

*adya cāham raṇe sarvān
pañcālān saha paṇḍavaiḥ*—Shalya Parva 7/13

*nihaniṣyāmi vā rājan
svargam yāsyāmi vā hataḥ
adya paśyantu mām lokā
vicarantamabhūtavat* —14

*adya sainyāni pāṇḍunām
drāvayiṣye samantataḥ* —19

"King Duryodhana, *adya* I will slay in the war all the Panchalas along with the Pandavas; or, being myself slain shall proceed to the heaven. Let all *adya* witness me striding the battle field fearlessly; *adya* I shall make the Pandava army flee from the battle field." Here the reader very easily takes the word *adya* in the usual sense of 'today' (see for one prominent illustration the Hindi translation of the Gita Press). But this is only to fall in the confusion created by the poet. As we have

already seen, the fighting was resumed only after one night had elapsed since this address by Shalya. Obviously *adya* here conveys some such sense as 'now (on the resumption of fighting)', or 'on the next day of fighting'.

Further, he usually mentions one event and then using the expression *tataḥ* ('thereafter') passes on to relate another later event. The reader feels that the latter event must have immediately followed the former; whereas actually the poet intends that the second event no doubt happened after the first, but with some time passing in between them. Again with the same cleverness he uses the expression *śvāḥ*, which in the usual parlance means literally tomorrow i. e. the immediately following next day. But in the poet's voluminous war account at several places it signifies the next fighting day (with one blank day intervening); just as in the context of the working of a public office the 'tomorrow' of saturday need not necessarily be sunday, but can indicate the next working day i. e. monday!

Apart from this, at times the author of the Mahabharata curiously mixes two different events in a yet different fashion. On the final blank day of the war Shalya was installed as C-in-C; the Kaurava army thereon raised full-throated shouts of joy; praises of Shalya were profusely uttered; he himself gave full assurance of his bravery on the battlefield; as a result the Kaurava army regained full confidence of victory, and thereafter spent the night in a quite peaceful sleep (vide verse 7/23 quoted above). After narrating at length all this chain of events in the Kaurava camp, the poet suddenly turns to the Pandava side and says in the immediately following verse (7/24, also quoted above), that Yudhishtira personally heard the joyous shouts of the Kaurava army and started deliberations with Krishna. Actually this incident in the Pandava camp had happened (in the afternoon of the blank day, i. e.) hours before the Kauravas' sleep in the night ended; and not after the close of that night. And yet, while reading the verses continuously, the reader's mind is apt to confuse the time sequence of these events.

Here is an example of another sort. On the night of the said blank day the Pandavas too slept soundly (due to the evening assurance of Krishna). The poet says in that connection:—

*suṣvāpa rājanīm tām tu
viśalya iva kuṇjarah
te ca sarve maheṣvāsāḥ
pañcālāḥ pāṇḍavāstatthā* —7/44

*karnasya nidhane hr̥ṣṭaḥ
suṣupustām niśām tadā* —45

"Yudhishtira slept soundly that night like an unhurt (perfectly healthy) elephant.³³ So too did all those brave Panchala and Pandava warriors have a good sleep during that night due to the joy over Karna's death". Now as a matter of fact, this was the night of the blank day; and subsequent to Karna's death one night had already passed, during which also the Pandavas must have enjoyed good sleep due to their joy over Karna having been killed. But by specially mentioning Karna's death in connection with this second night, the poet could easily create a confusion that the night under consideration may be the very first one after Karna's death in the afternoon, as a result of which the intervening blank day escapes the reader's attention!

Other prominent Dates

On the basis of all these facts I have now prepared the entire daily diary of that war, as appended below. It clearly contains the full one month of mourning after the close of the war. There is no need to reduce it to twelve days. Those who so reduce it argue that the first eighteen days of the mourning should be regarded as coinciding with the 18 days of the war itself, since on each such day deaths were continuously occurring. But in the first place, the poet has clearly located the complete month of mourning after the collective cremation which took place at the close of the entire war; and besides as now established, the total war period extends over thirtyfive days and not 18 only.

So also we now have the consistent serial dates of the subsequent events like the triumphant entry of the Pandavas in the city of Hastinapur, Yudhishtira's coronation, and thereafter the sublime discourse by Bhishma from his bed on the arrows. The discourse lasted five days. Its precise dates are also now clear. It is even possible to point out where it ended on each day. One may now dismiss as untenable all such ideas³⁴, that the Pandavas went to Hastinapur immediately after the war, or that King Yudhishtira spent fifty nights at Hastinapur between the end of the war and the death of Bhishma, or even that he spent fifty or five (or at any rate some) days at Hastinapur after the close of the discourse and before the death of Bhishma. In support of such misconceptions reliance is usually placed on the following verse.

*usitvā sarvarī śrīmān
pañcāśannagarottame
samayam kauravāgryasya
sasmāra puruṣarṣabha.* —Anushasana Parva, 167/5

33. By the way, there is a beautiful play on the word *viśalya* in this verse; as applied to the elephant it means 'without any hurt or disease', while with reference to Yudhishtira it can mean 'without the person Shalya, i. e. assured of the death of Shalya in the war'.

34. Vide, Bhandarkar Oriental Institute's "Anushasana Parva", p. 1121; Mr. Gokhale, Pandit Giridhar Sharma Chaturvedi and Mr. C. V. Vaidya. (Op. Cit.)

But this verse contains a curious verbal riddle and its real import is quite different from the one usually drawn from it.

Some proofs of these secrets of the chronology of the Mahabharata war have been provided in this summary. More have also been now obtained from the Mahabharata verses, which can be included in the publication of the full research. Let me hope in the meanwhile that the argument provided here will be adequate to convince the reader that the most intriguing time-riddles of the ancient epic of Mahabharata are at long last on the way of their complete and consistent solution.

The Table of Dates

DARK FORTNIGHT (which, according to the *amāvāsyā*-ending system, will be of the month of Kartika; but according to the *pūrṇimā*-ending system, of Margashirsha).

„ 7th:—Peace talks fail. Lord Krishna declares at Hastinapur itself the seven-days-ahead *amāvāsyā* for starting the war; and returns posthaste the same day to Upaplavya to give a report to the Pandavas. Moon in Pushya constellation, as clearly stated in the Mahabharata. Balarama's pilgrimage begins.

„ 8th to 13th:—With the drop of one *tithi* total days are five. As stated by the poet, this fortnight had only thirteen days i. e. had a drop of two *tithis*. Hence while one drop is assumed in the first week, another here in its latter week. So the total days here are only five. Now as the following *amāvāsyā* had the Chitra constellation, there is bound to be the repetition (*vrddhi*) of one *nakṣatra* during these five days. Thus the constellations are four only, viz Ashlesha Magha, Purva and Uttara, with some one of them repeated. During this period both armies reached Kurukshetra, constructed the camps etc. and held rehearsals. (Complete details of this have also now been ascertained).

„ 14th:—Sanjaya is appointed war reporter to Dhritarashtra. Moon in Hasta constellation.

„ 30th (*amāvāsyā*):—First day of fight (Gita Jayanti date). Moon in Chitra. 8th day of Balarama's pilgrimage.

BRIGHT FORTNIGHT (of Margashirsha month).

„ 1st:—Day of rest.

„ 2nd:—II Day of fight.

„ 3rd:—Day of rest.

- „ 4th :—III day of fight.
- „ 5th :—Day of rest.
- „ 6th :—IV day of fight.
- „ 7th :—Day of rest.
- „ 8th :—V day of fight.
- „ 9th :—Day of rest.
- „ 10th :—VI day of fight.
- „ 11th :—Day of rest.
- „ 12th :—VII day of fight.
- „ 13th :—Day of rest.
- „ 14th :—VIII day of fight.
- „ 15th (*pūrṇimā*) :—Day of rest. Moon in Krittika. This bright fortnight will have a drop of some one constellation between Swati and Bharani. Otherwise the moon will have to be put in Bharani on the *pūrṇimā*. But it cannot be so on the *pūrṇimā* of the Margashirsha month. At the most the moon can be on that day in Krittika, which is two places earlier than the Mrigashirsha constellation. This difference of two places can be related to the drop of two *tithis* in the previous fortnight. At the same time the constellation on the *pūrṇimā* can not recede beyond Krittika; for further down Shrawana is quite fixed for the bright fifth of the month of Pausha. Of course the precise constellation thus dropped between Swati and Bharani can be ascertained only when the full detailed calendar (*pañcāṅga*) of these days is prepared on the basis of the dates and clues now revealed.

DARK FORTNIGHT (which according to the *amāvāsyā*—ending-system will be of Margashirsha, but according to the *pūrṇimā*—ending system will be of Pausha).

- „ 1st :—IX day of fight.
- „ 2nd :—Day of rest.
- „ 3rd :—X day of fight. Bhishma's fall. His first night on the bed of arrows. There is a suggestive clue of this date in the Mahabharat. In the morning of this day, even after sunrise, there appeared in the sky the disc of the moon *avākśirāḥ* i. e. with its head-portion downwards (vide Bhishma Parva, 112/12). Such a sight can be seen in the western sky on the dark third. Obviously this date cannot be the bright ninth, as held by those according to whom the war started on the *amāvāsyā* but continued daily.

- „ 4th :—Day of rest. Sanjaya's first report (including the Gita) Drona's installation as C-in-C of the Kaurava army.
- „ 5th :—XI day of fight.
- „ 6th :—Day of rest.
- „ 7th :—XII day of fight.
- „ 9th :—Day of rest. This fortnight drops some one *tithi*, so as to place the moon in the Anuradha constellation on the *amāvāsyā*, which satisfactorily explains the then positions of the other planets as described in the Mahabharata. It may be added that this drop is compensated in the following fortnight.
- „ 10th :—XIII day of fight. Death of Abhimanyu.
There is a subtle clue for this date. Mourning Abhimanyu's death, the widowed Uttara exclaims, “*etāvāniha saṁvāso vihitaste mayā saha, śaṁmāsān saptame māsi tvam vira nidhanam gataḥ*” (Stri Parva, 20/28). This means that Uttara and Abhimanyu had a married life for six months only, and in the seventh month the latter died. Hence from the date of their marriage (after the end of the XIII year of exile), six complete months have to be reckoned till his death. From the marriage time as now ascertained in (the First Part of) this research, six complete months are thus reckoned till this dark tenth. This was also a problem for several commentators.
- „ 11th :—Day of rest.
- „ 12th :—XIV day of fight. Death of Jayadratha. Fighting continued throughout the night. Moonrise in latter part of the night. (No day of rest).
- „ 13th :—XV day of fight. Death of Drona.
- „ 14th :—Day of rest. Karna's installation as C-in-C.
- „ 30th (*amāvāsyā*) :—XVI day of fight.

PAUSHA BRIGHT 1st :—Day of rest.

- „ 2nd :—XVII day of fight. Death of Karna.

On this day Krishna, Arjuna and Yudhisthira went again to the battle field after sunset to actually see the dead Karna. At that time they saw the corpse ‘in the light of lamps’ (vide Karna Parva, 96/38); which means that there was very faint moonlight, and thus supports the bright second.

- „ 3rd :—Day of rest. Shalya's installation as C-in-C. 40th day of Balarama's pilgrimage.
- „ 4th :—XVII $\frac{1}{2}$ day of fight. Death of Shalya at noon. Fighting stops in the latter part of the day. Fugitive Duryodhana enters the lake. 41st day of Balarama's pilgrimage.
- „ 5th :—XVIII day of fight. Mace duel of Bhima and Duryodhana during half the day. End of Balarama's pilgrimage exactly on the 42nd day. In continuous serial order the moon also just in Shravana. Massacre by Ashvatthama in the midnight. Death of Duryodhana. Bhishma's 17th night on the bed of arrows.
- „ 5th (repeated) :—Collective cremation. This fortnight has some one *tithi* repeated, to place the moon on the *pūrṇimā* in Ardra in stead of Mriga, where it cannot be on the *pūrṇimā* of the month of Pausa. This repetition of one *tithi* compensates the drop in the preceding fortnight, thus completing the exact enumeration of fiftyeight nights of Bhishma on the bed of arrows.
- „ 6th to MAGHA BRIGHT 5th :—(one full month of thirty days). Pandavas observe mourning. Bhishma's nights 19 to 48 on the bed of arrows.
- MAGHA BRIGHT 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th :—Pandavas enter Hastinapur, Yudhishtira's coronation. Bhishma's nights 49 to 52 on the bed of arrows.
- „ 10th :—Request to Bhishma by Yudhishtira and Krishna for the great discourse. Bhishma's assurance to start the discourse from the next day. When the Pandavas were returning to Hastinapur at sunset after meeting Bhishma, the moon was rising in front in the eastern horizon;—vide Shanti Parva 52/33. This quite accords with the bright tenth.³⁵
- Bhishma's 53rd night on the bed of arrows.
- „ 11th :—12th, 13th, 14th and 15th (*pūrṇimā*) :—The great discourse by Bhishma. His nights 54 to 58 on the bed of arrows. Death of Bhishma just at the close of the 58th night, at dawn, on the full moon day (*pūrṇimā*) of the month of Magha.

Conclusion

Thus we obtain a consistent statement of the chronology of the Mahabharata war after taking into due consideration all such secrets of

35. The reader will no doubt now realise that the subtle references by the poet to the positions of the constellations and planets are in fact completely consistent, well planned and full of significance.

it as the (concealed) days of rest with one exception therein, the division of the last day of fighting (into two dates), the total war period (covering thirtyfive days), the (Chitra) constellation on the opening day of the war, and finally the vital but most enigmatic date (*pūrṇimā*) of Bhishma's death as well as its precise time (of dawn). In a similar way the subtle chronology of the pre-war period has also now been ascertained. The total picture thus formed is sure to throw important light on the time of the composition of the Mahabharata and the personality of its great author. One further consequence of all this is also that a due consideration of these chronological secrets will now be one of the essential factors in ascertaining the original Mahabharata text out of the plethora of the readings at present available. Any reading inconsistent with these basic secrets will have to be treated as an interpolation; and on the contrary one that is consistent will deserve special attention.

In the end I should like to clarify one point. It has been said above that several longstanding chronological riddles of the Mahabharata are now being satisfactorily resolved. However, the Mahabharata is being studied with great interest since centuries, not in one or two but several languages, throughout India and indeed outside too. It is hardly possible for any single individual to know it all. Hence, though I have referred above to several previous views on this epic within my knowledge, yet (looking to my linguistic and other limitations), even apart from them one may not totally rule out the possibility of a discussion, direct or indirect, by some previous scholar, of some point said to have been thoroughly overlooked so far. And if and when such a thing comes to light, it will but be proper to give due consideration to it. I shall therefore be happy even if my readers chiefly concentrate for the present on the point whether this thesis does after all satisfactorily resolve the ancient chronological riddles of the Mahabharata. Time itself will no doubt give the final verdict about the ultimate originality in respect of such a vast subject whose study extends over several centuries and numerous countries. And of this also I am well conscious that whenever that judgment is given, it too will lose its significance in the further course of time; and only the gifted words of the Mahabharata's great author along with their true import would, and should, remain in the public mind. In the meanwhile, as soon as this calculation of the precise dates of the Mahabharata plot gets common recognition, it will be advisable to turn urgently to such further problems as the real identity of the author who after composing such a vast and wonderful epic has left a mystery even about his own name and place, the precise year of the Mahabharata war as intended in his calculations, and the time of the composition of the epic.

SOME OPINIONS

The Scholar-statesman **Dr. Sampurnanand** (former Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh, and Governor Rajasthan) :—" ...The great work you have undertaken...would it be possible for you to come over to Varanasi for an exposition of some of your research...you may rest assured we shall invite all available scholars...Every letter I receive from you whets my appetite and increases my curiosity. The new light thrown by you on this subject is very valuable".

Mahamahopadhyaya **Pandit Parameshwaranand** Shastri, Vidya-Bhaskar, (honoured by Govt. of India; formerly member, central Sanskrit Board, Principal Sanskrit College, Lahore, etc.) :—" The Lalbahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth (Delhi) is honoured by your learned lectures. They have inspired research scholars to rethink over several current ideas about the Mahabharata War...That will settle many debated points. Problems so far in dispute will be resolved. The eyes of foreign scholars too will be opened".

The renowned Indologist Mahamahopadhyaya **Dr. V. V. Mirashi**, D. Litt, Scholar of History and Sanskrit, Nagpur :—" The questions about the starting date and total days of the Mahabharata war have been extremely disputed since very ancient times. The Mahabharata contains several references on the matter; but no one had been able to reconcile, even a majority of them, let alone all.....Principal G. W. Kaveeshwar after a minute study, has demonstrated in details that they are all consistent, that the Mahabharata references to the dates of the war, the days of Balarama's pilgrimage, the date of Bhishma's death are all correct....The credit for establishing this for the first time entirely goes to Principal Kaveeshwar....If this thesis is accepted, and it has been so thoroughly propounded with proofs as to merit universal recognition, some of the current memorable dates (e. g. of the Gita-Jayanti, Bhishma's death) will have to be altered..."

The **Nagpur Times**, Nagpur : "... This one man probe ... the discovery which is his own....and so many other events which drove many of our learned scholars into a blind lane and which baffled all attempts so far have been explained by him and linked up into a cogent story."

Report in the '**Maratha**', a leading daily of Bombay : " A new era has dawned in the field of Mahabharata studies by this very fundamental research of Professor Kaveeshwar. "

Editorial in the '**Gomantaka**', of Goa : " As a result of this research the time has now come to alter the current date of Gita-Jayanti."

Mr. K. L. Joshi, Vice-chancellor, Indore University " Prof. Kaveeshwar has shown a new insight into the chronology of Mahabharata and interpreted the timings of the epic war with originality and Logic. "

BHARAT JYOTI, Bombay (Special article) : " The Secrets of Mahabharata, a literary Discovery. "